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Diana Shelley: What CND achieved
Murder's other victims
Ian Aitken: I blame Jo Grimond

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Legalise it

The only way to win the drugs war

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"For almost three years I was totally deprived of contact with the outside world and for much of the time had no access to news of any kind. So, when I did get my first magazine via the charity Prisoners Abroad, my world suddenly became much larger than my small cell. I still had so much to catch up on. I had no idea what the Chernobyl factor was or who Diana and Fergie were, and I certainly did not know what Mrs Thatcher said at Bruges."

Roger Cooper, April 1991

Roger Cooper spent five years in Evin prison in Iran, one of the most feared prisons in the world. He was accused of spying for Britain and received the sentence of death plus ten years. Roger has campaigned tirelessly on behalf of Prisoners Abroad since his release.

For a gift of just £50, a British prisoner somewhere in the world will receive their weekly copy of the New Statesman & Society.

Prisoners Abroad is the only UK charity caring for over 800 British prisoners in some fifty different countries. Often held in unimaginable squalor, thousands of miles from their families, isolated by language and cultural differences, we offer them real hope and practical support. You can help too by taking out a subscription for your favourite magazine, which we will send to a British prisoner abroad. Thanks to the publishers of the New Statesman & Society, a year's reading will only cost you £50, but will be worth its weight in gold to a prisoner somewhere who is just waiting for us to send it. We have a long list of prisoners anxious to receive their weekly copy.

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PRISONERS ABROAD

THE DAVID THOMAS PRIZE

David Thomas was a Financial Times journalist killed on assignment in Kuwait in April 1991. Before joining the FT he had worked for, among others, the Trades Union Congress.

His life was characterised by original and radical thinking coupled with a search for new subjects and orthodoxies to challenge.

In his memory a prize has been established to provide an annual study/travel grant to enable the recipient to take a career break to explore a theme in the fields of industrial policy, third world development or the environment.

The theme for the 1994 prize, worth not less than £3,000, is: CAN THE DEVELOPING WORLD BECOME RICHER WITHOUT THE DEVELOPED WORLD BECOMING UNEMPLOYED?

Applicants, aged over 35, of any nationality, should submit up to 1000 words in English on this subject, together with a brief c.v. and a proposal outlining how the award would be used to explore this theme further. Please argue your case from the viewpoint of a particular country or industry.

The award winner will be required to write a 1500 to 2000 word essay at the end of the study period. The essay will be considered for publication in the FT.

CLOSING DATE JANUARY 7 1994

APPLICATIONS TO:

ROBIN PAULEY, DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
THE FINANCIAL TIMES (NS)
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A Pulitzer Prize winner who defied the PC rules

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The bite spreads parasitic worms. They breed under your skin and produce hordes of microscopic worms called microfilariae which infest your body for years. You itch, you get skin problems, you become debilitated.

Then the microfilariae invade your eyes. And you slowly become blind.

It's called River Blindness - "the disease at the end of the track". You'll find it in a host of fast-flowing rivers in West and Central Africa. And there you will find most of the victims - the million or so who have already lost their sight and the seventeen million who have the symptoms and are at risk of blindness; their sight could be saved - quickly and easily.

The price of River Blindness

Consider what happens if you lose your sight in a poor African country. No disability benefit, no regular medical facilities, little prospect of remedial work.

There is just your family living at the harshest subsistence level. You become a burden on them. You will need to be led from place to place. You can do little to contribute to their welfare.

For this is the particular agony of River Blindness. It takes years to gestate. When blindness strikes, you are likely to be in your thirties or forties. You are likely to be the family breadwinner. Without you, the family will lose their hard-won self-sufficiency and become dependent on the charity of neighbours.

And it is all avoidable.

THE BLACK SIMULIUM FLY

Ivermectin: It works, it's cheap, it's available

Merck, Sharp and Dohme have developed a drug to halt River Blindness. It is a simple-to-take white tablet called ivermectin and it has been thoroughly tested in Africa. It not only prevents blindness but it tackles the painful symptoms as well. There are no serious side effects.

The manufacturers have generously agreed to supply ivermectin free. Sight Savers is committed to distributing it in Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Uganda and Sierra Leone. We intend to expand the programme to include Guinea and Senegal.

If this sounds easy, it isn't. Sight Savers works worldwide and River Blindness is just one part of our work. So, a distribution programme on this scale will strain our resources to the utmost - we will need all the help we can get.

Then again, you have to allow for the reality of medical work in poor countries. In some of those countries there are village health workers or committees who we can train to distribute ivermectin. In others we are relying on nurses who go from village to village. We shall be very reliant on local people, village chiefs in particular, to guide much of this programme.

And there are transport problems. The dry flatlands of Mali make a 50cc motorcycle a reasonable means of travel; in the hilly, forest regions of Sierra Leone, we'll need a tougher 125cc machine. A lot of ivermectin will be distributed by simple bicycle.

And the programme will go on for years. In each community at risk, ivermectin will have to be distributed annually for at least ten years to break the transmission cycle of the disease. Our aim worldwide is to ensure that, within twenty five years, **nobody** will lose their sight through River Blindness.

IT BITES YOU

A massive campaign, then. **But how can we look at that small white pill and at the terrifying statistics of River Blindness and at the harrowing stories of its effects... how can we know all these things and do nothing about it?**

How much can you help us?

The whole world is full of claims on your generosity and the problems of the Third World will never go away in our lifetimes. But our River Blindness campaign is a hard-headed, practical and immediate chance to do something to prevent one evil *once and for all.*

It may help to think of your donation in very literal terms.

For it takes just £25 to protect twenty five people against River Blindness for a whole year.

£70 buys one of those bicycles for a medical assistant.

And £400 sponsors a training course for health workers.

But, whatever you can afford to send us, you will know that it is going to help rid the world of the scourge of River Blindness. There are not many things you can do that *can achieve so much, so profoundly,* so quickly.

Thank you for whatever you can do.

PLEASE USE MY DONATION QUICKLY

I am enclosing a donation of

☐ £100 ☐ £25 ☐ £10 Other _____

with a cheque/PO made payable to Sight Savers.

OR I prefer to give via my Access/Visa Card No.

Card Expiry Date _____ NST01

Cardholders Signature _____

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) _____ Initials _____

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Sight Savers is grateful to the producers of "Blue Peter" for their contribution to this River Blindness Appeal.

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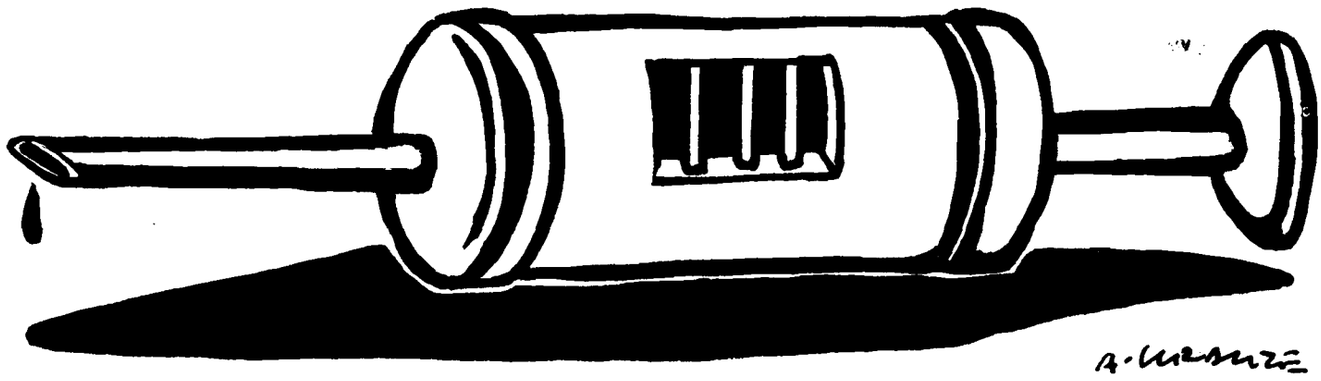

Legalise it

Tony Blair is *partly* right. Responding, at the weekend, to the latest announcements in Home Secretary Michael Howard's 27-step plan to combat crime, he said that proposed new laws to deal with hunt saboteurs and new age travellers were side-issues compared with what most people were really concerned about—violent crime, muggings, burglaries . . . and drugs.

The shadow home secretary is partly right because virtually everything Howard has announced since the Tories went big on retribution and small on thinking at their Blackpool conference has been either irrelevant, wrong-headed or downright counter-productive. More people in prison, more austere prison regimes, less sympathy for the criminal, more for the victim—it sounds good from the platform (or it did to the audience at Blackpool, at any rate), but it will do about as much good in reducing crime as will cutting off people's benefits in reducing unemployment.

The concentration on minor "problems", moreover, and the minorities associated with them, reflects the void at the heart of government policy-making. The fact is that, beyond a vague rhetoric around the belief that tougher punishments will reverse rising crime, the Tories are at a loss about what to do. Like the public at large, they are confused and distressed about a society that, in terms of the extent and—sometimes—the nature of criminal behaviour, seems to be coming apart at the seams. But, deprived of an adequate explanation, still less a strategy, to deal with the country's criminal ills, increasingly they lash out indiscriminately, seeking not so much solutions as scapegoats: single mothers, squatters, new age travellers, hunt saboteurs.

Far from bringing down the crime figures, the outcome of such scapegoating, ironically, will be to create completely new classes of criminals. It is a sign of a government that has wholly lost its way in criminal policy that it is now countenancing laws whose principal effect will be to make potential criminals out of 50,000 squatters, 10,000 or so travellers and many thousands more anti-hunt campaigners who will have done nothing worse than to partake in peaceful protests. These groups have nothing to do with rising crime (or where they do, existing laws are adequate to deal with them). Their criminalisation is both irrelevant to the real problem and an indication of a nasty, narrow (and often wholly disingenuous) suburban moralism now being elevated to the pretence of a political philosophy by John Major and his ministers.

In this small-minded universe, drugs are the demon king. They go to the heart of every fear or petty prejudice, blinding the judgment of those who would blame them for all social ills as surely as they blind the judgment of those for whom they become a destructive addiction. And it is here that Tony Blair is wrong. Drugs may be central to public concern about crime, although the evidence is patchy. But such concern is in large part to do with the exaggerated association by politicians and the media of drug-taking with criminal behaviour.

Of course, the production and supply of illicit drugs is, by definition, part of a criminal subculture. Of course, the very illegality of drugs brings users into contact with that subculture and turns them into potential offenders. Of course, the combination of addiction, high prices and limited availability means some users turn to crime to finance their habits.

The normal reality of drug supply and use, however, is a long way from the media stereotype of gun-toting Yardie dealers preying on needle-scarred, Aids-carrying junkies, who prostitute their bodies and steal from their neighbours in a cycle of personal and social decline. The more typical picture is one of recreational drug use, as represented by the recent survey showing that up to half of young people take illegal drugs regularly. (This was roundly dimissed, incidentally, by one government minister on *Question Time*, who said that the people running the survey obviously didn't talk to the same young people as he did. This represents another trait in government policy-making: if you don't like the figures, deny their veracity—and hence disregard the problem.)

Such drug use is, broadly speaking, harmless—or at any rate no more harmful than the kind of alcohol and nicotine consumption that passes as usual social behaviour. Certainly, it should not be subject to criminal sanctions.

The fact is that the criminal law works no better in combating illicit drug consumption today than when it was employed against alcohol during Prohibition. As Alexander Cockburn writes (page 18), in the US, 54 federal agencies, with a budget of $13 billion, have achieved nothing in their "war on drugs" other than the criminalisation of large sections of the population. As the numbers in US prisons doubled during the 1980s, to almost one million today, it was crimes of simple drug possession that put many of the new prisoners behind bars. And the switch to crack-cocaine, the scourge of black inner cities, was itself brought about because the war on drugs made it so much more difficult to distribute the more bulky (and less profitable, weight-for-weight) marijuana.

The British police have so far taken a more sensible approach. More than half of those arrested for possession of cannabis now receive cautions, compared with 2 per cent ten years ago. Even so, people are still being sent to jail for simple possession, and of 72,000 seizures in 1992, 57,700 involved cannabis. Only 880 involved crack, 2,400 MDMA (Ecstasy) and 3,000 heroin. The "war on drugs" remains primarily a war on one soft drug, cannabis. If it "succeeds", its principal effect, as in the US, is likely to be to push suppliers into dealing in other, hard drugs.

Biting the bullet of decriminalisation (with the war on addiction being fought through education and treatment) may be more than any politician is prepared to take on yet. But until they do, Tony Blair—or whoever—will never be more than *partly* right.

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The future of NSS

And now the good news . . . The board of the Statesman and Nation Publishing Company, publishers of *NSS*, has concluded an agreement to provide a refinancing package for the magazine. The arrangement with Philip and Geraldine Jeffrey, finalised last week, provides the company with £400,000 for its immediate needs and development. It also paves the way for joint support by other investors for the magazine's future expansion plans.

Under the agreed deal, the Jeffreys have each acquired a 24.5 per cent stake in the company. They have also provided a further £125,000 each in the form of five-year loans. They intend that their joint stake should be reduced to 25 per cent as further investors join in a consortium that will provide finance for future investment. To support the planned expansion scheme, 1.25 million new 20p shares will be issued before the end of 1993.

Philip and Geraldine Jeffrey are long-time readers of *NSS*. They were also early contributors to the Defence Fund, set up to meet costs arising from the Prime Minister's libel action against us. In an early discussion about the future of the magazine, they expressed a preference for *NSS* "to survive and prosper without our involvement other than as subscribers", but expressed a determination to ensure its continuing publication "as a radical journal of the thinking left".

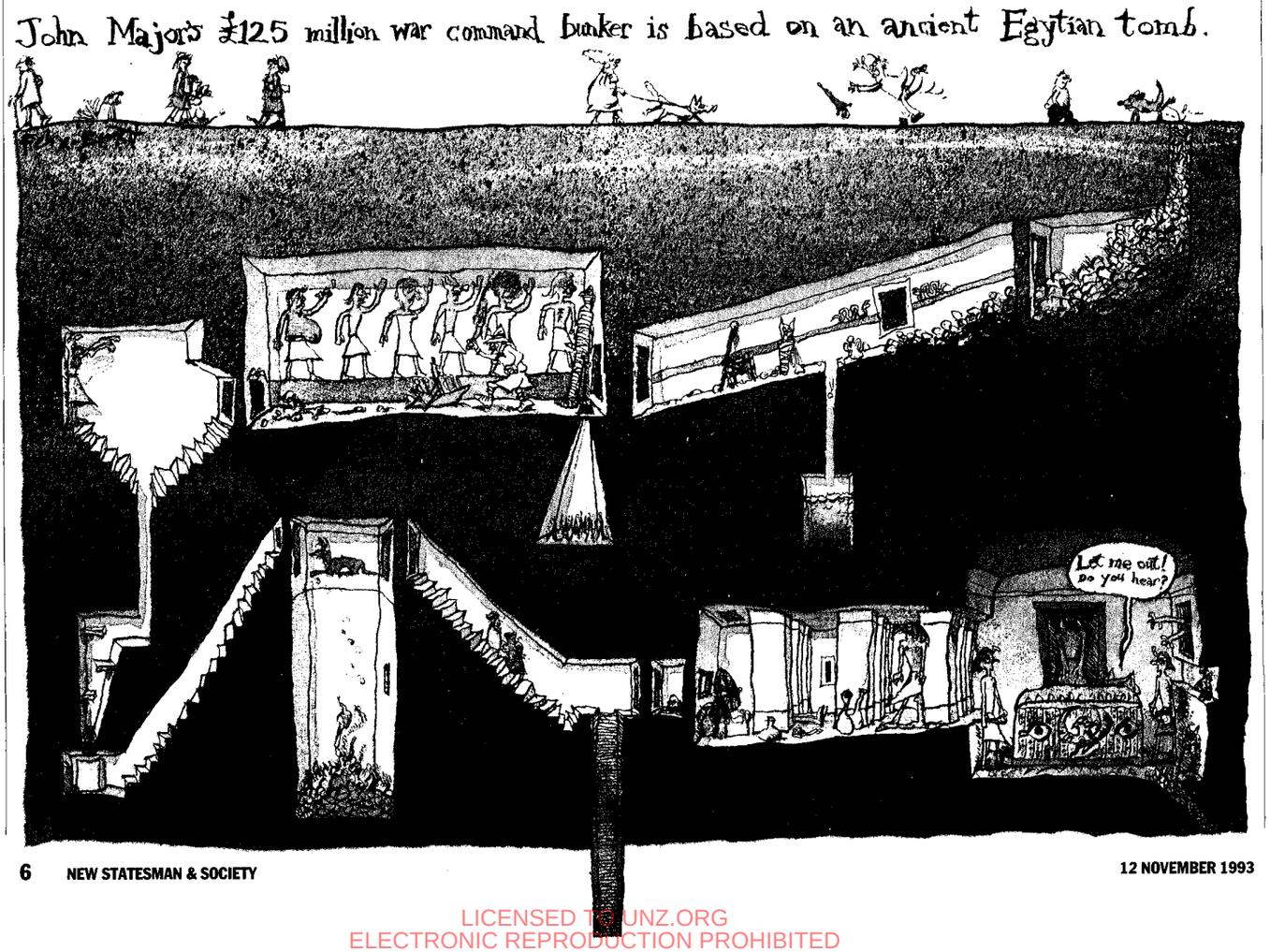
The Jeffreys have been Labour Party members—"with varying degrees of commitment and enthusiasm"—for 32 years. With others, they took over a bankrupt paint company, with the objective that it be collectively owned by its employees. "As it became successful, however," says Philip, "and our colleagues grew richer and richer on paper, they lost enthusiasm for making shares available to newcomers, with the result that the company ended up being owned by its first 180 employees—a small proportion of the whole workforce." The company grew into the paint manufacturing and retailing group, Decor 8, which merged with another DIY retail chain, Fads. The merged group was taken over for £146 million by Ward White, which was itself subsequently acquired by Boots.

As readers may have gleaned from press reports, the SNPC had previously received offers for outright purchase of *NSS* from Derek Coombs, a businessman and former Conservative MP; a similar offer was also received from the Jeffreys. An offer by Derek Coombs for a 49 per cent stake in *NSS* was in fact agreed in principle by the SNPC board—and announced in *NSS*—in September. A final decision was scheduled for an extraordinary general meeting on 21 October.

Many of the discussions that took place around this time are, of necessity, confidential. It is in the nature of some business dealings that they cannot be fully and promptly reported to readers and supporters, much as we may wish to do so, particularly in the light of reports appearing elsewhere. Suffice to say that the eventual agreement had the unanimous backing of the SNPC board, which considered that the goal of that agreement in providing for the widest possible future spread of share ownership, with a maximum holding of 25 per cent by any individual or group, would best assure readers of the magazine's future independence. At the same time, the board also welcomed an offer of support by Derek Coombs. We are currently discussing this and possible further investments with a range of interested parties.

The deal also relieves the immediate pressure to raise finance through the Defence Fund. We are now within £70,000 of our target to cover the costs of the Prime Minister's libel action, and a number of fundraising activities are still und erway. We will be scaling down the operation of the defence campaign, however; and will no longer be running the regular defence fund page in *NSS*, although occasional reports will appear from time to time. We welcome any further support, of course, but most of all would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their loyalty and support. That we can now look forward to a brighter, more secure future is in no small measure due to all of you.

FELIX BENNETT



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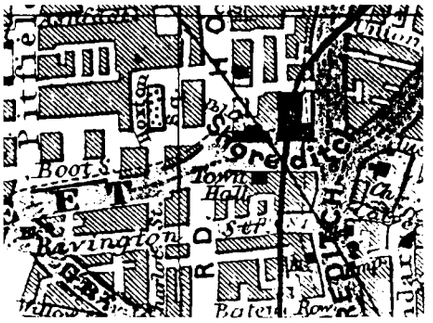

You have probably already seen those frightening billboard ads for Molson beer. They feature a gargantuan close-up of Norman Tebbit, next to a quote from one Ian Dean of Islington, London: "One thing our European friends do not understand is that a strong beer can have a really clean taste . . . " But imagine the horror of the real Ian Dean of Islington, who happens to be black, upon seeing himself associated on billboards across the capital with the man who, among other things, came up with the idea of the "cricket test". Dean has now written to the Advertising Standards Authority, complaining that he is the only Ian Dean on the electoral roll for Islington, and is certainly not the "Ian Dean" quoted alongside the Chingford Skinhead. Molson has now launched a new set of ads, featuring Margaret Thatcher in place of Lord Tebbit. The quote featured in these is: "You never really appreciate what you have until its taken away from you . . ." But it seems Molson is taking no chances this time round; the words are attributed to one "Georgina Caroline Stoppard of Chelsea". Should certainly be safe with that.

Last Sunday's memorial bash for E P Thompson at the Institute for Education was a jolly affair; less a wake than a celebration of the historian, polemicist and peace activist. A wide range of friends and colleagues contributed anecdotes and songs, among them Christopher Hill, Sheila Rowbotham, Peggy Seager and Mary Kaldor. The whole show was hosted with aplomb by Tariq Ali. But Shoreditch best enjoyed the communal singing of an old cockney music-hall number—chosen because when Thompson and comrades were members of an international work brigade in socialist Yugoslavia during the late 1940s, an Italian contingent of fellow workers confronted them with a rendition of "Bandiera Rossa". When asked to respond in kind, the nearest thing to a British revolutionary anthem that Thompson et al could think of was the rather less stirring "My Old Man Said Follow The Van".

Shoreditch has been amazed to learn how tight security is in the House of Commons. Last week, Peter Hain's researcher was waiting in her office for a friend to arrive. The telephone rang. "We have here a person who claims to have an appointment with you," said a stern voice. "But I'm afraid we can't let her in as she has explosives in her handbag." Yes, it was 5 November, and the friend was on her way to a Guy Fawkes night party. Still, one can't be too careful. Imagine what a packet of sparklers in the wrong hands could do.

According to a *Sun* "exclusive" this week, Neil Kinnock's treatment by Marks and Spencer has been a little different from that of other famous people. Apparently, Kinnock tried to write a cheque for £300 using a cheque card that covers only the first £50 of any purchase. Asked quite reasonably to provide some ID by the cashier, who failed to recognise him, Kinnock realised he was carrying none. Finally the store manager was found, who knew who he was, and the embarrassed Kinnock was allowed to leave with his two new suits. According to a spokesperson, Kinnock has always turned down private shopping facilities, "even when he was leader of the opposition". Now that he *isn't* leader of the opposition, perhaps it might be a good time to rethink this policy.

BBC staff obviously have a pretty good idea of the audience its politics-and-sport radio channel, due to replace Radio Five next March, is likely to attract. It has yet to be officially named, but in the meantime everyone working on the launch has taken to referring to it as "Radio Bloke".

Shoreditch was very pleased to see the launch of Earth 2000—Labour's Environment Commission for Young People at the end of October, with Chris Smith and Clare Short in attendance. Getting "young people" interested will be the job of Grassroots (Labour's Young Green Network) who will "organise discussion groups . . . and carry out a large-scale questionnaire survey". All very tempting, no doubt. But in case you find yourself put off by the word "Labour", there is another organisation for you, says the Grassroots literature. Apparently, there exists a "depoliticised division of Grassroots" named Earth Forum, which also has a diary of events and fixtures, and whose "details" Grassroots "will be glad to provide". How soon before Shoreditch is invited to the launch of "depoliticised division" of the Labour Party?

The Rt Hon Dr Jack Cunningham MP

On 29 October 1993, Shoreditch inaccurately reported the circumstances of Michael Meacher's move from being Overseas Development spokesperson to spokesperson on the Citizen's Charter. We made unfounded claims regarding Dr Jack Cunningham's involvement regarding this reshuffle.

We accept that Dr Cunningham played no part whatsoever in Mr Meacher's move and our criticisms of Dr Cunningham were entirely baseless. We apologise to Dr Cunningham, and at his request we have made a donation to a charity of his choice.

FOURTH ESTATE

A regular monitor of the tabloid press

4 November: Peter Mckay in the *London Evening Standard* is outraged at Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams' prominence. "Adams is now a fixture on the scene," he fumes. "It wouldn't surprise me to learn he'd been asked to switch on the Christmas lights in Regent Street this year. Or that, while doing so, he announced that sightseers had three minutes to leave the area."

5 November: Chris Buckland in the *Daily Express* comes over all disapproving following the final, delayed arrival of the Rail Privatisation Bill. "It was not a pretty sight," he solemnly pronounces. "For long periods only the missing ingredients of ice-cream and jelly flying through the air distinguished the occasion from a party for hyperactive children."

6 November: The *Sun* loses patience with the small voices protesting at Michael Howard's plans to deal with the menace that is sweeping the nation this week. You know the one, squatters. "If someone took over your house you'd want them out—quick. So why make a fuss over plans to make it easier for squatters to be evicted? . . . We'll be feeling sorry for burglars next."

7 November: "Norway is socialist-governed," reveals Woodrow Wyatt, the *News of the World's* the Voice of Reason. "The prime minister's a lady. Mrs Berget is pregnant. Under Norwegian law she's due a maternity leave at 80 per cent of her salary. Her husband's allowed a minimum of two months' paternity leave on full pay." Such progressiveness brings no joy to Lord Wyatt, however, especially as around half the Norwegian cabinet are women—"though not all are likely to be pregnant", he allows. Nevertheless, let that be a lesson to the Labour Party: "Norway's another argument against Labour's daft plan to have women as half their MPs. Plus compulsory promotion to half the top posts."

9 November: *Daily Star* editor Brian Hitchen is exercised by the desire for Commonwealth membership expressed by a number of independent nations. He demands they be blackballed from membership of the club, and fumes that "a ragbag of begging-bowl nations in BLACK [Hitchen is keen to emphasise the colour, for some reason] Africa have decided that it would be one hell of a good idea to join the Commonwealth. They should be told to sling their hooks—immediately. There are enough sticky-fingered crooks and evil dictators already in this club of 49 countries without any more scroungers being encouraged to join."

10 November: "£12,000 SIKH FUNERAL JETTY ON THE RATES" reveals an "exclusive", no less, from the *Daily Star* today. "A left-wing council is set to splash out £12,000 on a riverside burial platform for Sikhs." Funny, Fourth Estate can't remember the last time maintenance on, say, a graveyard made the headlines.

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Ordure, please. A barking mad **Sean French** faeces up to doggy do on his shoes

I sometimes worry that I might be a potential, hot-headed, have-a-go hero without knowing it. There are certain people who, should they ever find themselves on the scene of an armed robbery will take themselves by surprise and attempt to tackle the armed raider, to make a grab for the sawn-off shotgun, to place their own vehicle in the path of the getaway car, or something equally foolish. It's a completely pointless form of heroism, putting your own life at risk to save money that the bank doesn't care about. At best you may get a small reward from the company. More likely you will be in the mortuary, while the police are announcing that they would strongly discourage any member of the public from following your example.

I can only hope that modern science will soon find a way of locating the area of the brain whose misfiring provokes this self-destructive instinct, and then either neutralise it or advise the afflicted person to deal with their bank over the phone.

However, there is one form of impulsive heroism that I am entirely safe from, namely the sacrificing of my life in order to save my cat, as film director Duncan Gibbins did in Malibu last week, plunging into the inferno and sustaining 95 per cent burns, from which he died the following day. (Needless to say, the cat was, in the way that cats generally are, perfectly all right, with about 0.1 per cent of singed whiskers.) Doctors use a rough calculation to determine whether a patient will survive serious burns: they add the percentage of the body that has been burnt to the patient's age, and if the total is 100 or more, the patient is unlikely to survive. The moral of this, I suppose, is that your cat is more likely to survive than you are, and that on your 100th birthday you should be careful not to get too close when you blow the candles out.

If I found myself facing a similar domestic inferno, I would be more likely to toss my cat into the blaze than rush into the burning house to rescue him. This is largely because he has recently brought his skill at capturing and killing pigeons to near perfection. I have now developed my variation of that old riddle about finding a worm in an apple. Question: What is worse than your cat bringing a dead pigeon into the house? Answer: Your cat bringing in half a dead pigeon.

In fact, by tossing my cat into the flames I would only be following an old English tradition, sadly abandoned. On 5 November, we went to a fireworks display at Highbury Fields, which was so amiable that it was easy to forget that we were attending an anti-Papist festival celebrating the torture and execution of a Catholic freedom fighter. It was a wonderful occasion: Highbury Fields crammed with a huge, good-humoured crowd undifferentiated by age, race or class, except for the nobs standing with wineglasses in the windows of their Georgian houses around the sides. And it was a free public event. I had to give myself a sharp pinch to assure me that this was actually Britain in 1993.

Had the ceremony been taking place during the reign of Charles II it would have been more robust. As Keith Thomas reports in his book, *Man and the Natural World*, it was common during anti-Papist ceremonies to "stuff the burning effigies with live cats so that their screams might add dramatic effect".

Meanwhile, back in California, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is changing the name of its highest award for people who do brave things in order to save animals to the Duncan Gibbins Award. Perhaps the Football Association could follow the ASPCA's example and change the name of the FA Cup to the Wilfred P Nevill Cup, Wilfred P Nevill being the name of the British infantry captain who entered the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916 dribbling a football into no man's land. (Captain Nevill died, but the football was brought back and displayed as a trophy.)

I have an uncle in Sweden who has spent much of his career trying to prove by scientific experiment that owning pets is good for your health. Nevertheless I believe that there is something pernicious about the British sentimentality towards animals, which draws disproportionately on the already dwindling reserves of public compassion. The next time you hear somebody argue that private charity ought to replace public welfare payments, ask them if they know what two British charities have the largest income. The largest recipient is the National Trust. The second largest is the Guide Dogs Association.

I'm all in favour of keeping old buildings standing. I've nothing against guide dogs, and in my youth I collected my share of silver bottle tops and sent them in to the appropriate *Blue Peter* appeal, but money sent to the National Trust is not going to do much about the people sleeping in cardboard boxes. Free-marketeers assume an implausibly perfect knowledge among charity donors, much as they do in the economy as a whole, but experience suggests that people are more attracted by the education of sweet little labrador puppies than they are in the arguably more important education of uncuddly deprived children.

In the Influences questionnaire, a few pages ahead in this magazine, the last question asked of the opinion former is, "If you could pass one law, what would it be?" Usually people talk about banning war or racism. Michael Frayn had a good one, which was to insist that where there are rows of swing doors, such as in department stores, theatres, arts centres and so on, they would have to, by law, *all* be locked or unlocked.

My own law would be to ban the possession of cats or dogs in cities. I have a problem with the whole idea of domestic pets, with their ancestral instincts and skills mutated and bred into a depraved, decadent toytown. Cats prowl along fences like kitsch, fluffy, wind-up panthers; dogs bounce around in parks like dingos that have been redesigned by Barbara Cartland.

But mostly I'm motivated by their shit, a substance so unorganic that, unlike the products of grass-eaters, for example, it is of no use in the garden. And if anybody writes in and says that responsible dog-owners don't let their dogs crap in the street, I'll track them down, tie them to the back bumper of my car and drag them behind it along the pavement of our road.

And as for the argument that it is the irresponsible dog owner who should be blamed and not the dog, well, that is a matter which will be decided by the due authority on the Day of Judgement. Meanwhile, if an irresponsible dog owner has his dog taken away from him, then he will not be able to deposit dog shit on the pavement of our road, however irresponsible he is. Dog-owners and their organisations produce bullshit, and they can feel free to spout as much of that as they wish.

It is when I feel rage of the above sort, especially of a political kind, that I now painfully feel the loss of Roger Woddis. I'm reading Ian Gilmour's brilliant, abusive, savagely funny account of the Thatcher years, *Dancing With Dogma* (just out in paperback), and it inevitably raises the issue of how few people on today's left could be so rude, cogent, brutal and entertaining. What has happened to the tradition of violent satire, mockery, directed straight at the jugular? Steve Bell is still part of it and so was Woddis.

The memorial event celebrating him and his work last week at the Conway Hall in Red Lion Square was a joyous occasion. There was little sentimental anecdotage; just a few raucous memories and, mostly, the bracing words of the man himself, vividly recited by people as different as Bill Owen, Charlotte Cornwell, Kenneth Baker MP and, most wonderfully of all, by John Wells.

One Over The 80s, a collection of poems by Roger Woddis published over the past decade or so in New Statesman, is available, price £4.99, from New Statesman & Society, Freepost, London E2 8BR

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Welcome to the workless week

John Major's "back to basics" injunction to his cabinet is being interpreted as a switch in the nineties to a new social agenda of family values. This is placed in contrast with the economic agenda of the eighties, the centre of Margaret Thatcher's world.

Even those of us who would have some sympathy with the kinder, gentler aspects of the "family values" ticket must take a hard look at the false juxtaposition of these two agendas. If ministers want to get "back to basics", I can think of no more basic "basic" than a job, with which a man and a woman can support their family.

Yet through most of the Thatcher/Major period in government, between two and three million of their fellow-citizens have been without jobs; and by the old criteria, even that is an underestimate. The "dependency culture", about which the Conservatives, like others, are rightly worried, derives largely from unemployment that has lasted too long.

So it is useless to look at individual responsibility, dependency on the welfare state, or even crime without simultaneously seeking cures for unemployment.

Crime? The normal response when anyone has the temerity to associate crime with unemployment is for ministers to say it is a slur on those without jobs to make this link. Are we saying that all unemployed people are potential criminals?

Well, no, only in the sense that we are *all* potential criminals. To take an extreme example, I cannot believe many people would let their children starve if they could avert this by stealing. And thank goodness for that proper morality.

Undoubtedly those without jobs face more temptation than the rest of us, and when even a tiny proportion succumb to that temptation, it adds significantly to the crime statistics.

It is rather pathetic that this argument even has to be made. How far from reality politicians who deny any connection between crime and unemployment must live.

Earlier this year, I spent some time in a sink housing estate in Newcastle. Nobody much worked there. Three generations of some families had been on the dole. There was no expectation that people would ever get a job, or that their training scheme would lead to employment. Their instructors did not expect it either.

Unsurprisingly, the enterprise culture was not greatly evident on that estate. In fact, some of the people I met exercised their talent for enterprise in ways that the law does not recognise (and that does not simply mean a move from tax avoidance to tax evasion). They were into what, in the black ghettoes of America in the sixties, was called "hustling"—that is, living off their wits, in various illegal ways.

For example, two brothers spent their time stripping all useable building materials from houses that had fallen derelict. Well, "fallen derelict" is a euphemism, since many of them had been "torched", in some cases before the occupants had actually vacated the premises. It would have taken a very innocent person to believe there was no connection between those who torched the houses and those who stripped them, before selling the bricks, wood, lead, and other materials so fortuitously available to building contractors of their acquaintance.

The brothers had no real sense that what they were doing was wrong. Indeed, the words "right" and "wrong" probably did not feature much in their vocabularies. They made some effort to defend this way of augmenting their benefits —"doin' a favour for a bloke, know what I mean?"— but it was hard to believe any great wrestling with consciences took place.

How far from reality politicians who deny any connection between unemployment and crime must live

It would be facile to suggest that there is any obvious or certain way to restore such places to a semblance of legal life, much less prosperity. But little will be achieved by taking a harsher line on benefits for single mothers, or turning the Child Support Agency loose on deserting fathers. Unemployment is often a factor in family break-up as well.

What is needed is a revolution in the cultures of such sink estates. In the worst cases, this will probably take a generation to achieve. The way to start is to make people at least aware of the possibility that they might get back to work. Sadly, the present recession has spread the culture of hopelessness into new areas, including the coalfields.

Britain is sowing a bitter harvest in these recessions of the eighties and nineties. These problems will not be solved by social engineering, however firmly based on values of honesty and family stability, necessary though these are.

People in the distressed areas of Britain—and that is the only way to describe parts of this country now—need jobs. If the government cannot solve the economic problem, over whose growth it has presided, it has little hope of solving the consequent social problems.

If I sound more strident than I usually try to be, this is because, many years ago, I saw the shape of things to come. In my native Ulster, levels of unemployment that have only reappeared in parts of England during the past ten years or so, existed throughout the post-war period.

There was greater prosperity in the forties and early fifties than between the wars, but in parts of Belfast, Londonderry and Strabane, unemployment that ran into the second and third generation of one family never went away.

Is it possible to doubt that, when the political explosion came, this endemic unemployment was a factor in making some young men and women ripe recruits for terrorism? As with crime in England, only a minority. Terrorism has been the shocking Northern Ireland equivalent of crime, with gunmen and bombers replacing what policemen and journalists call, with weary cynicism, the "decent ordinary criminal".

Writing about Ulster in recent weeks, I have clearly tested the patience of some *NSS* readers who have their minds made up about who, over there, are the "good guys" and who are the "bad guys", and who do not want their prejudices upset by uncomfortable facts. Walter Pater used to have a condemnatory phrase that I find relevant to many political situations: he did not like people who were "rebels against the fact".

His meaning, as I recall it from reading him many years ago, was that it was pretty futile to deal with facts as you *wished* they were, rather than as they *actually* were.

I fear that much fashionable analysis of Ireland, along simplistic sectarian lines, is in rebellion against the facts. On the subject with which we started also, John Major's intended switch from an economic to a social agenda, Pater has a lesson to teach. Of course, there are social problems to be solved, many of them starting in breakdown of the family, personal irresponsibility, and basic dishonesty. And yes, some are aggravated by canting "political correctness".

But ministers will only be tilting at windmills if they think they can begin seriously to cure such problems without first producing a dramatic rise in employment prospects, the oil of hope in the engine of social improvement. To try to avoid this issue would be to make them "rebels against the fact".

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New Zealand votes in chaos

New Zealand has been thrown into political turmoil by last Saturday's general election and referendum on the electoral system. The voters have returned the first hung parliament for 65 years and dumped first-past-the-post elections in favour of proportional representation. The country is faced with the prospect of having no effective government and no electoral system in place with majority support.

Until next week, the final tally of seats will not be clear: postal votes, which could determine at least four seats, have yet to be counted. But it is likely that the ruling National Party, led by Prime Minister Jim Bolger and with just under 36 per cent of the vote, will take 49 seats in the 99-seat unicameral parliament, with the Labour Party, led by Mike Moore and with just under 35 per cent, taking 46. The Alliance, a coalition of five green, left and Maori parties, looks set to take only two seats (despite taking more than 18 per cent), the same number as the right-populist New Zealand First Party with 8 per cent.

As the results became known, Bolger declared his intention to hang on: "There is no question that we will form the next government"; Moore countered that "National has no moral authority to govern", and that "New Zealand has reclaimed its progressive instincts". Almost as a rehearsal for what will happen after PR elections, both major party leaders have spent the week desperately wooing the minor parties.

The election result was undoubtedly a spectacular blow to both major parties, particularly the National Party, which was defending a massive parliamentary majority, having won 49 per cent of the vote in the 1990 election. Opinion polls suggested that it would win outright with a five- or six-seat majority.

It is clear, particularly from the good showing of the Alliance, that many New Zealanders are fed up with what has become known as the "New Zealand experiment"—the programme of privatisation and deregulation introduced by David Lange's Labour governments in the 1980s and continued by Bolger. The once-extensive welfare state has been turned into a minimum safety net for those deemed by means tests unable to pay. Local government, the health service and education have been reshaped along market lines, and employment laws have stripped workers of many rights.

But the clearest outcome on 6 November was the referendum result: 53 per cent voted for proportional representation and only 46.2 per cent to retain first past the post (in New Zealand, FPP not FPTP). New Zealand will now adopt the "mixed member proportional"

(MMP) system for future general elections—unless an election has to happen before MMP is ready to run in 18 months' time.

New Zealanders were offered a choice between four different PR systems at a referendum in 1992. They opted for MMP, a version of the system used in Germany in which the voter has two votes, one for a constituency MP, as at present, and a second for a list of candidates chosen by a political party. The parliamentary seats are then allocated half to the constituency MPs and half to the party lists. In order to be given any seats, a party must gain at least 5 per cent of the vote. Last Saturday's referendum was a direct choice between FPP and MMP.

The pro-MMP Electoral Reform Coalition had the support of the majority of Labour candidates, the Alliance and New Zealand First, some National Party MPs, the trade unions and an impressive list of individual "New Zealanders for MMP". It argued that MMP is fairer because it directly relates the number of seats gained to the number of votes cast, offering a politics based on consensus rather than polarisation.

The pro-FPP Campaign for Better Government, led by Peter Shirtcliffe, chair of newly privatised Telecom, had a huge, undisclosed budget, and was supported by big business and a majority of MPs from both major parties. It employed Saatchi and Saatchi to get its message—"Don't mess with success"—across to the voters. Ironically, one of its key arguments was that FPP always yields strong, stable, effective government—precisely what it failed to deliver last Saturday.

Richard Crook

15 YEARS AGO

"The secret state within the state"
10 November 1978

E P Thompson examines Chapman Pincher's account of his life as the secret services "expert" on the Express

[We] may suppose that Mr Pincher has been less an operator than the tool of other operators. In this view, all the leaking has been contrived and wholly proper. It has been an exercise by our superiors in managing news: in which proper persons decide not only when an Official Secret becomes and Unsecret, but how it becomes an Unsecret for some, while it remains defended by criminal sanctions if it is published by others. . .

In this view, the columns of the Express may be seen as a kind of official urinal in which, side by side, high officials of MI5 and 6, Sea Lords, Permanent Under-Secretaries, Lord George Brown, Chiefs of the Air Staff, Lord Wigg and others stand patiently leaking in the public interest.

But although this view explains many episodes (especially during the premierships of Macmillan and Heath, who would appear to have had some sense of propriety and to have kept the Security Service in a state of low visibility) it is not a sufficient one. For what Pincher's text suggests, again and again, is private enterprise in leaking Official Secrets, sometimes by persons in pursuit of private or political vendettas, sometimes in the course of lobbying by service chiefs (for this missile, or against that aircraft carrier) but most particularly in pursuit of extreme-right objectives: the aim being to defame the parliamentary Labour Party, particularly cabinet ministers, and the left generally throughout the country.

Haiti left to disaster

Haiti is a country that never fails to evoke a rash of negative superlatives—the poorest, most illiterate, most oppressed, most environmentally degraded. To that list should now be added the most betrayed.

The United Nations has certainly made a mess of Bosnia, Somalia and Cambodia. But at least it tried. In Haiti, the UN's most decisive act was the withdrawal last month of its human rights observer team—just as the killing intensified.

"You should have seen people's faces in the villages where we had worked as we drove out," said one human rights monitor. "It felt like total betrayal."

In the 25 months since the overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, perhaps Haiti's first fairly elected president, a national tragedy has become an international scandal.

General Raoul Cedras' military regime has blatantly reneged on the agreement to allow Aristide's return signed in July on Governor's Island, New York. The deal was simple: a full amnesty and certain constitutional guarantees in exchange for the lifting of sanctions and the return of Aristide on 30 October. But in the absence of any action to enforce the idea, it now appears as no more than a face-saving exercise for the UN and the US.

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NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

"The Haitian military now knows that the mere threat of effective intervention to put Aristide back in power can be averted by just stepping up the killing, raising the stakes," said a Haitian journalist this week. "How long is this nation going to be held hostage at gunpoint?"

In the past two years, some 4,000 people have been killed, tens of thousands have tried to flee and hundreds of thousands have gone into hiding. Of those fleeing, an unknown number have drowned attempting to reach the US. Those who have been intercepted by the US coastguard and those who are caught in the US are automatically repatriated—often to face death or torture. It is the first time that the US has repatriated refugees to a country ruled by a regime it does not recognise.

The UN has a special responsibility, if not legal obligation, to Haiti. It organised, monitored and paid for the election in December 1990 that brought Aristide to power. Aristide won 67 per cent of the vote on a turnout of more than 80 per cent. He received five times more votes than his closest rival—a mandate that dwarfs that of any other leader in the western hemisphere.

It is clear that Haiti remains what it was when Noam Chomsky wrote *The Political Economy of Human Rights* at the depth of the cold war—the bottom of the pile. Even Somalia doesn't attract headlines like *Time* magazine's recent splash—"Is Haiti worth it?"

Most of the US policy-making establishment does not like Aristide. Some of it positively hates him, as recent CIA disinformation about his mental stability and lies about his human-rights record has made all too clear. After the overthrow of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier in 1986, the US tried to direct the Haitian political process through a series of interim military regimes, while opposing Aristide and the grassroots cooperatives and church groups that eventually brought him to power. After Aristide was ousted, Washington dithered.

The result is that the military has had plenty of time to destroy the democratic structures that emerged during Aristide's eight months in power. The uprooting of Duvalierism has been completely reversed. The Tonton Macoutes are back in the towns and cities, the *chefs du section* are back in the rural villages, and the free press—one of Aristide's greatest legacies—has been silenced.

But with the mediation process now apparently exhausted, it could well be that Haitians' patience will snap. By necessity, they have developed a tradition of self-reliance and protest that goes back well before the election of Aristide or the overthrow of Baby Doc. In 1791, Haitians launched the world's only successful black slave revolt. By 1804, they had established the world's first black republic, defeating armies sent by Britain, France and Spain in the process.

But if they do have to get rid of Cedras and his cronies on their own—probably at the cost of many more lives—the betrayal by the international community will not be quickly forgotten or forgiven.

Philip Wearne

LETTER FROM GAZA

On 21 October, Assad Siftawi, considered by many as the most influential Palestinian leader in the Gaza Strip, was shot dead by two masked assailants while waiting to pick up his eight-year-old son from school.

The meaning of his death was understood by millions of Palestinians and Israelis who watched as TV cameras followed his cadaver, cloaked in a blood-soaked shroud, being hauled to his family's home. On sight of the body, members of his family were filmed violently tearing down a portrait of Yasser Arafat. Siftawi had been Gaza's most senior representative of Arafat's Fatah movement, the largest and most powerful Palestinian faction in the PLO.

If the family's gesture was born of grief, it nonetheless eloquently spoke to the fears of many Palestinians that Siftawi was the latest victim of a potentially cataclysmic power struggle unleashed since the PLO-Israeli peace accords were signed in Washington on 13 September.

He was the third major Fatah figure to have been killed in the Strip in less than a month. On 21 September, Mohammed Shaban, former treasurer of the Gaza Bar Association, was shot dead in his car after attending a rally in support of the peace agreement. Three weeks later, his closest political aide, Maher Kehail, was killed by masked gunmen in a barber's shop. All three were seen publicly as advocates of the PLO-Israeli accords and staunch Arafat supporters.

The spectre of a fratricidal war is simply too chilling for most Palestinians to contemplate

Shaban had been head of the Fatah-backed Political Committees set up in Gaza in 1992 to rally support for the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid peace negotiations—but he had been quietly ousted just before his death. For his part, Siftawi had been reported in September by an Arabic newspaper to be likely to head a major ministry in the new Palestinian "Autonomy Council" during the interim period of self-rule—but a day later, Fatah retracted the story, saying that "our leadership is still studying and preparing necessary arrangements for the transitional stage".

While apparently minor, such ructions fuelled speculation that a political fight between the PLO leadership outside and the Palestinian leadership inside the territories could be in the offing, and that Gaza had become the site for a war of position for the new patronage and institutional dispensations prefigured by the accords. The subsequent assassinations of Shaban and Siftawi have whipped up the speculation into a visceral sense of foreboding.

The killing of Siftawi is particularly significant. A co-founder with Arafat of Fatah while a student in Cairo in the early 1960s, he courted controversy throughout his political life. He served five years in Israeli prisons in the 1970s for organising armed resistance in Gaza after the 1967 Six Day war. On his release from jail, however, he quickly gained a reputation as one of Fatah's foremost doves, advocating a "two-state solution for two peoples" ten years before it became official PLO policy. In 1989, during the Palestinian uprising, he met with Yitzak Rabin, now prime minister but then Israeli defence minister, to discuss the then prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir's, peace plans.

News of the assassination shook both Israelis and Palestinians, provoking furious debate about who were the perpetrators and what was the motive. The Israeli press in particular had a field-day, claiming that Siftawi's death was the result of an intergenerational struggle between the PLO's old guard in Gaza and younger elements thrown up by the uprising who, disarmed by the peace deal, are now resorting to terror to stake their claim in the new political set-up. Rabin blamed "internal feuds within the PLO".

Whatever the reasons for the killings, the spectre of a fratricidal war over the peace agreement or the political and finanancial spoils to be got from it are simply too chilling for most Palestinians to contemplate.

Not surprisingly, the PLO in Tunis was "extremely angry" about Rabin's off-the-cuff surmises as to the identity of Siftawi's assassins, and about the media's flights of fancy generally. The morning after the murder, the director of Fatah's HQ in Gaza, Sami Asaia, denied that it had "anything to do with an internal conflict within Fatah", while Arafat mourned the loss of "his brother" and hinted that Siftawi has been the victim of "a conspiracy outside the Arab world". The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas—which has emerged as the main Palestinian opposition to the peace agreement and is strong in Gaza—"publicly and unequivocally" condemned "all three slayings", adding that "a group of people is trying to spread conflict in the Palestinian house through a campaign of political assassinations".

Between 15,000 and 20,000 mourners turned out for Siftawi's funeral. Unlike the Shaban and Kehail processions, which doubled as rallies in support of Arafat and the peace accords, the mood at Siftawi's was sombre, with strains of fear and anger. While Palestinian flags showed in abundance, there were few pictures of Arafat and no nationalist slogans, only cries that "the blood of Abu Ala [Siftawi] will be avenged". Dotted throughout the entourage were placards showing portraits of Siftawi, Shaban and Kehail, each wreathed in black and white *kefiyyahs*—the symbol of Fatah—and captioned by a single line in Arabic. "Killing the peace," it read.

Graham Usher

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Murderers have mothers too. Aftermath counsels crime's other victims, such as the parents of the boys accused in the Jamie Bulger case. **Tim Dawson** reports

Relatively guilty

Shirl Marshall is like a woman possessed. Murderers, rapists, sexual abusers, their victims and their families are her obsessions. When Marshall last explained—to inmates at Peterhead Prison—what she does, several broke down and cried. She told them: "I help the other victims of serious offenders, their families. Have you any idea what happened to your family when the police arrested you? Have you thought about the mess you left behind? Your mothers and wives woke up one morning as Mrs Brown and Mrs Smith, and by the end of the day they were 'murderer's mother' and 'rapist's wife'."

"Aftermath", the group Marshall founded five years ago, now has branches all over Britain. Propelled by Marshall's energy and the help of a handful of volunteers, Aftermath works on ever more high-profile cases. In recent months, Marshall has been counselling the families of the boys accused of murdering Jamie Bulger, whose trial started on 1 November.

Marshall works 60 or 70 hours a week for Aftermath. She spends most of her time with women whose husbands, brothers or fathers have committed murder, rape or other sexual offences. Discovering that someone they love has committed a hideous crime devastates most people. Media attacks, friends who desert them and neighbourhood hostility add to their pain.

Vicky's brother Jack is a murderer. Three years ago, he hacked to death a man who refused to go for a drink with him. All that connected the head of the corpse to the body were the wires from a pair of earphones. "I just couldn't believe it when my father phoned to tell me," recalls Vicky. "I walked round like a zombie for three weeks. I thought, 'He couldn't have done it.' When the police interviewed me I was numb. They were talking about a monster, not the brother I loved. Until the trial, I didn't really accept that he had done it."

Since her brother received a life sentence, Vicky's life has been no easier. Her father received threatening phone calls. The windows in his house were smashed and "murderer" was daubed on his front door. Vicky's sister was beaten up. And Vicky wasn't left out. "I started to get phone calls at two in the morning threatening all sorts of things to my husband and children. They said they knew where my kids went to school. I'm terrified, but there is nothing the police can do if they don't know who is making the calls."

Vicky and Jack were close. They grew up together in a children's home, and both were sexually abused by their father. At 27, Vicky is Jack's elder sister by a year. At the time of the murder she lived in London, and Jack in a town in the north of England. "I feel so guilty," she explains. "He phoned me two days before it happened to say he was depressed. I told him I couldn't afford to visit for a couple of weeks. If I had gone when he needed me, this might never have happened. I wasn't there to protect him. I feel guilty because I might have saved that man's life as well."

A month after Jack's trial, Vicky was at her lowest ebb. She told her father that she wanted to jump under a train. Her father passed on Shirl Marshall's phone number.

"I phoned loads of times, got the answering machine, and didn't leave a message. Eventually I did. When I first spoke to Shirl, I couldn't believe how much she gave. I was sobbing, and my whole story just came out. Shirl told me about Aftermath, and about lots of other people in similar situations. She told me about her own experiences. I could tell she knew what she was talking about. She invited me to my first meeting. I would have cracked up without that help."

The idea for Aftermath came to Marshall in a café next door to Sheffield Crown Court. "I was attending a murder trial with the mother of the murdered man. I was a volunteer with Victim Support. It was a terrible case." As the trial proceeded Marshall noticed another stricken woman in the public gallery day after day. She realised it was the murderer's mother.

While Marshall was getting a cup of tea, the woman she was with disappeared. On her return, she told Marshall that she had gone to speak to the murderer's mother. "I told her that I had no hatred for her, and that I knew she must love her boy like I loved my boy," she told Marshall. The two mothers had cried in each other's arms.

The incident stuck in Marshall's mind. As did the words of the murdered boy's mother. "There are so many victims of a crime like this."

The centre of Aftermath operations is Marshall's tiny flat in Sheffield. Her secretary works on a makeshift desk in the hall and group meetings take place in the living room. Photos of Marshall's four children and four grandchildren cover the walls. Between them

Debbie Humphrey

Home comfort: Marshall counsels offenders' families in her front room/office

are pictures of prisoners with whom she corresponds, among them inmates of death row in the United States, some of whom have already been executed.

"Aftermath is about helping women come to terms with what their husbands and sons have done, and to cope with their being in prison. We do help some fathers and brothers, but it is mostly women. It is also about trying to prevent these crimes being repeated," Mar-

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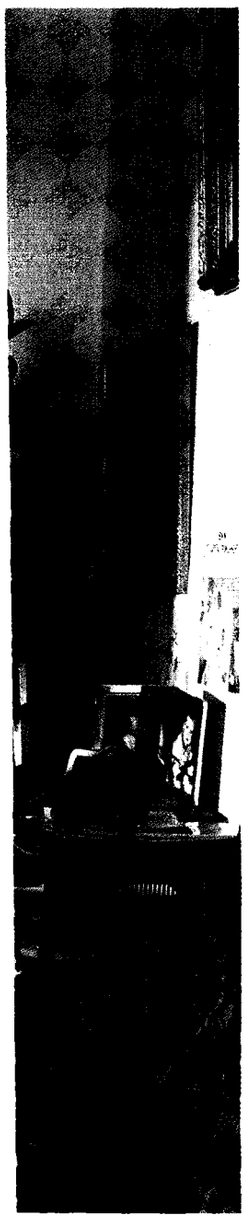
shall explains. "Whatever the crime, these men, and it is almost always men, offend from the family. And when they leave prison, it is to the family they will return. That is where we must sort out the problems."

Marshall regards Aftermath as a massive extended family. She travels 1,000 miles a week and never stays in hotels. Friends and group members welcome her into their homes as she moves from mother to murderer to child molester with her message of love. Those she meets are unanimous in their feeling for her. "She reached inside me and stroked my soul," said one. Another described Marshall leaving her house. "She took some of my pain away with her."



Money is a perennial problem for Aftermath, however. Despite a small grant from the Home Office last year, few people wish to be seen supporting it. The group's chair, who is responsible for fund-raising, prefers to be known as PW, for fear of attacks on his family. No one receives any payment for working for the group.

Marshall is disarmingly honest about her motivations: "I suppose there is something in me that needs to be needed. That is necessary to do this sort of work. One of the chief delights I have is being the grandmother figure in a prison. I often find my sense of justice offended, and my maternal instinct outraged. Those are the things that make a woman reach out."

Aftermath's Yorkshire group is almost too large for Marshall's flat. Thirty or more arrive with small offerings of food. All have tragically similar stories to tell. Sarah holds a senior job in local government. Ten years ago she arrived home from work and was preparing the tea when the police knocked on the door. They had arrested her husband for rape and child molestation.

"At first, I thought the arrest must have been a big mistake. When the police told me I could see him, he wrote me a note saying the best thing I could do was to forget all about him. And there were certainly times when I just wanted to throw all his belongings out of the window. For a couple of years, I was on tranquillisers and couldn't really do anything at work."

A prison probation officer suggested to Sarah that Aftermath might be able to help. It was a year before she went to one of the meetings, however. "I thought the rest of the people there wouldn't be like me. When my husband was first arrested I used to stand in the queue outside the local prison waiting to see him. There were all these young women, giggling and smoking, thinking it was a bit of a day out. I was absolutely heart-broken, and ashamed to be there. I imagined an Aftermath meeting would be full of gangsters' molls."

"When eventually I did go to an Aftermath meeting, I found a roomful of lovely people. I didn't feel at all awkward. However much your friends support you, they can't help but think about 'the horrible man who got you into this position'. At Aftermath meetings everyone is in the same position."

"I've gone through the whole range of feelings for my husband. Slowly he has told me some of the things that drove him to do what he did. And I have found that my love for him is the same as it was before the police arrested him."

When the ten women who comprise the Bognor Regis Aftermath group meet at Mary Rutter's house, Mary's husband, Barry, sometimes joins them. Barry served 15 years for murdering his aunt. After 12 years inside, he was moved to Ford open prison, near Bognor. While there, he had a job at a local wild bird hospital. To while away the years, Barry built up a detailed knowledge of breeding budgies.

Mary often took her two sons to the bird hospital for a day out. There, Barry became friendly with her youngest son, David. "I thought Barry was so caring. When I found out he was a murderer I wasn't bothered at all." Mary started visiting him and eventually they decided to marry. Unfortunately, while Barry was at the open hostel where many lifers spend their last few months in jail, the police picked him up for drunken driving. Return to the cells was immediate.

"For that he served seven months in the Scrubs and then a year and a half in Ley Hill prison in Gloucester," said Mary. "It took me four hours to get to Ley Hill by train, and four hours back. And you never know what they are going to do next. At one point, Barry was transferred to Bristol prison without my being told. Aftermath makes so much difference because I can talk to someone who knows what I am talking about. When someone you love is still in prison, things happen that massively affect your life, and over which you have no control."

Barry is able to help the group by explaining aspects of prison life. He makes it clear that Aftermath faces an uphill struggle: "A lot of people don't understand how selfish prisoners are. Prisoners are their own worst enemy, really. All you think about when you are inside is yourself. Most of them never give any thought to what sort of life their family outside is having."

Aftermath can be contacted at PO Box 413, Sheffield S1 3UP, tel: (0742) 326166

INFLUENCES

CHRIS SMITH
Shadow environmental protection secretary

What books and authors have had the greatest influence on your political beliefs?
A wide range: Tawney's *Equality*—seminal for any understanding of democratic socialism; Keynes' *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*—needed now more than ever. F M Cornford's *Microcosmographia Academica*, the most hilarious send-up of the processes of politics I've ever come across; Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*; Dickens' *Hard Times*; the poetry of Andrew Marvell, W B Yeats, Edwin Muir, and Hugh MacDiarmid. Wordsworth and Coleridge, the letters of Keats, and the essays of Hazlitt; the great explosion of Romantic thought 200 years ago, that taught us new ways of seeing the world; Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance*—a modern politician who really believes in a cause.

Name one film, one book, one play, one poem, and one piece of music that you would most like everyone to see, read or hear.
Film: *Local Hero*, directed by Bill Forsyth. Anyone who sees it can't help falling in love with the far west of Scotland.
Book: Forster's *Howards End*. "Only connect"; a credo for our modern atomised world.
Play: *Murder in the Cathedral* by T S Eliot.
Poem: Wordsworth's *Prelude*. It would be my desert island book.
Music: Schubert's *Quintet in C*.

In the early stages of your life, which figures stand out as an important influence on you?
John and Robert Kennedy—especially Robert, during that fateful year of 1968.

What event during your lifetime has had the greatest effect on your political beliefs?
The Vietnam war. It opened my eyes as a teenager to the folly of governments, the distress of ordinary people, the power of protest, and the hope of change.

Which political figure do you most admire?
Martin Luther King.

If you could visit any time in history for 24 hours, which would you choose?
The 15th century, so I could spend my 24 hours watching Piero della Francesca at work painting his frescos in the Church of San Francesco in Arezzo.

What do you consider the greatest threat at present to individual freedom and liberty?
Poverty. Many of my constituents are struggling to survive; freedom is a remote concept in such circumstances. And the current Tory lurch to the right will make things even worse.

On important matters, whose opinion—other than your own—do you trust most?
My partner's.

Who is the greatest prime minister we never had?
Nye Bevan, though he was never really in a position to take the leadership. Closely followed by Hugh Gaitskell. Modern British politics would have been very different.

If you could pass one law, what would it be?
Full equality for all lesbian and gay citizens.

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JOHN PILGER

When war is peace, and vice versa

In his essay, *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell wrote: "Political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. When there is a gap between real and declared aims, one turns instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink."

The cuttlefish are squirting out so much ink these days that some are understandably confused. In these pages recently, Angus Roxburgh, a BBC journalist in Moscow, wondered why the word "reforms" should be reported in inverted commas. That he asks the question at all is an indication of the progress of organised obfuscation.

According to my Penguin dictionary, "reforms" are "measures intended to effect a removal or correction of an abuse". This bears no likeness to the "reforms" being imposed in Russia, which the British media, with honourable exceptions, report as both necessary and a good thing. In fact, these "reforms" are merely another set of abuses, the replacement of one form of totalitarianism with another. The new system is said to be a "market" economy. "Market" suggests the free movement of goods and services for all; in practice, as Russians who can barely afford to eat and stay warm know well, it means the opposite.

In Britain, too, such words have lost their dictionary sense and have become propaganda. "Reforms" now means people dying on NHS waiting lists while services are destroyed. A "reformed" City of London is one in which 40,000 company directors declared unfit to run a company, according to a recent report by the comptroller and auditor-general, are allowed to do so.

In the "information society" of the 1990s, the manipulation of language has become a principal political weapon. The vocabulary of the advertising and public relations industries has spread to the news management industry, known as the media. The "reforming" of British public services—that is, the pirating and destruction of them—was executed behind a pervasive advertising and PR campaign funded by public money: so pervasive that, in the late 1980s, a massive amount of advertising revenue was funded by the government.

In the news management industry, the use of euphemism is not new. But the denial of context is now unremitting. "Terrorists", a current favourite, are those who oppose the state, never the state itself. Thus, the Irish are perennial "terrorists", while the British state, regardless of its enthusiastic participation in the slaughter of 200,000 people in the Gulf, is not. The atrocities committed by Irish paramilitaries can never compete with those of the state. More members of the Ulster Regiment were killed on the western front in the 1914-18 state terror than have since died in all the "terrorist outrages" in and related to Ireland.

"Human rights" is another product of the cuttlefish. This fashionable term is used by those who have no interest in its literal meaning. Last April, the Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, assured the Indonesian tyrant General Suharto that: "Western countries cannot export western values (of human rights) to developing nations without making adjustments to local economies." Translated, this means that human rights have no relevance unless the right of international capital to exploit a nation's resources is threatened. With the right to exploit guaranteed by Suharto, Hurd gave him £65 million in British aid and removed any obstacle to the sale of £500 million worth of British Hawk fighter planes, which will be used against those resisting the genocidal regime in Jakarta.

It was President Jimmy Carter who, in the late 1970s, popularised "human rights". While Carter expressed grave concern about the abuse of human rights by America's enemies, he worked assiduously to protect the right of America's clients to abuse them. While damning the Soviet Union and Iran, he gave Indonesia all the lethal means it needed to wipe out a third of the population of East Timor. So delighted were the Indonesians with this Orwellian interpretation that they adopted it themselves, claiming that by invading East Timor, they were bringing "human rights" to the East Timorese.

In his novel *1984*, Orwell called this "reality control" and "doublethink". War became peace, and vice versa. The present-day application of this excites almost no discussion in this country. This is not so in the US, where Noam Chomsky's prodigious work has demonstrated how western propaganda works. Chomsky's collaborator is Edward Herman; their joint book *The Manufacturing of Consent*, is a classic of its kind. Now Herman has written *Beyond Hypocrisy: de-coding the news in an age of propaganda*. Published by the Boston collective, South End Press, *Beyond Hypocrisy* deals primarily with the US, but most of it can be easily applied to Britain.

Central to modern propaganda, writes Herman, are "purr" and "snarl" words that carry implicit approval or disappointment. "Moderate", for example, is a purr word and "extremist" is a snarl word. Applying what Herman calls "doublespeak", genuine extremists like Suharto (and Yeltsin) become moderates, and a genuine moderate, like the late Salvador Allende, becomes an extremist. "Tragic" is another purr word, "barbaric" a snarl word. Thus, the shooting down of a Korean airliner by the Soviet Union in 1983 was "barbaric" while the shooting down of an Iranian airliner by the United States in 1988 was a "tragic error".

The Middle East, says Herman, "has yielded a cornucopia of doublespeak", exemplified by the term "peace process". "This endearing phrase," he writes, "tells us that the Camp David agreements were 'a good thing'. In fact, Camp David successfully pulled Egypt out of effective opposition to Israeli policies." In this way the "peace process" became an efficient war process. I would add that the peace process worked so well in Israel's favour that the Palestinians were forced to accept the current "settlement", which gives them little.

According to Herman, actual censorship plays an insignificant part in modern brainwashing. Official censors merely ensure the telling of "little lies"—such as the Ministry of Defence's rules for reporting the Gulf war—while "super lies" require no such assistance and are propagated freely and naturally by the mass media. The "super lie" of the Gulf war, as told by President Bush and parrotted by John Major, was that "all diplomatic options have been exhausted" and there was no alternative to war.

In *Beyond Hypocrisy*, Herman presents a wonderful "doublespeak dictionary of the 1990s". Here are selections:

Another Hitler: last year's moderate, now threatening US interests (eg, Saddam Hussein).

Crisis of democracy: the emergence of the majority from a state of political apathy, along with their threatening attempts to understand, organise and participate in their own governance.

Democracy: a system that allows the people to vote for their leaders from among a set cleared by the political investment community.

Development: putting to profitable use; exploitation.

Fair trade: trade in which my own country's advantages are deemed natural, but those of other countries must be rectified by threats and unilateral retaliation.

Propaganda: their lies.

Restructuring: closing down, or dramatically reducing employment.

Self-defence: our right to attack anybody for any reason satisfactory to ourselves.

Self-determination: the right of a people to select a government acceptable to us.

Truth: emissions from the mouths of the powerful.

Victory: annihilation.

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Thank you, Mr Howard (boom, boom)

(Michael Howard wants hunt saboteurs to be prosecuted)

When I was a cub
And I hid in the scrub
from the slavering mouths of the curs,
I choked on my grub
when I heard of a club
consisting of Hunt saboteurs.

It gave me the hump
and a pain in the rump
that aspersions were cast on my speed,
for there in my clump
I was safe from a chump
jumping hedges to harry my breed.

What right have these gits
in their mufflers and mitts
to deprive me the thrill of the chase?
I live on my wits
while a westerly spits
in each whiskery, rubicund face.

On the moors there's a hush
as I waggle my brush
and put paid to the hunt with my paws,
so I hope they will blush
at their sentiment (mush!)
and accept that they're awful old bores.

What their protest destroys
is the pleasure of ploys
like exuding a false line of scent,
but the ultimate joy's
more than animal poise
and outwitting each idiot gent.

No, what Howard has done
is to rescue the fun
that the countryside's long
guaranteed—
at the end of a run,
at the end of a gun,
to lie down for a jolly good bleed.

These sabs for a start
cannot fathom the art
or the passion of being pursued,
nor the thrill of one's heart
torn completely apart
and allowing one's guts to be chewed.

Bill Greenwell

Inconvenient civil liberties are being cast aside. Britain needs a Bill of Rights that can't be removed by the first hostile government, argues **Stuart Weir**

Talking liberties

Two "traditional" British liberties now hang at the mercy of a demagogic government—the right to silence and the right to trial by jury. I doubt if anyone, other than John Patten, still swallows the traditional belief that both rights will be defended by a parliament fulfilling its historic mission to protect the liberties of ordinary citizens, or a host of "free-born Englishmen" asserting public opinion.

For too long now both Labour and Conservative governments have impatiently cast aside inconvenient liberties that impede the executive's power to get tough with terrorists, criminals, refugees and other "minorities". Public opinion may have stopped the absurd Dangerous Dogs Act; but governments can always get their "Dangerous Persons Acts" through. The only protection for civil liberties in Britain lies not in parliament, but too far away, in Strasbourg.

A quick fix in available. The liberal establishment, including now the best part of two conservative institutions, the judiciary and the Labour Party, want it. This is, of course, incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. But it is now obvious both that Britain needs more than a single injection of political and civil rights law from Europe—and that a majority of the people want more.

A quick fix is available—incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law

It is curious that the liberal establishment has learned only the one basic lesson from the Thatcher/Major years—that political and civil rights require legal protection against the arbitrary power of big government. Ordinary people have learned a far harder lesson. For the social and economic rights that they inherited in the postwar settlement and took for granted have either been removed or grossly diminished; and the trade unions, there to protect those rights, were crushed.

If we are to begin to build a self-confident and sharing society, its founding articles have to be that formal political equality on its own is worthless; the social and economic well-being of its citizens have to be protected against both the dictates of the state and the unravelling inequalities of modern capitalism. Not only that. The small advances that women have made are now under siege on a variety of fronts, ranging from the media-led reaction against moves towards sexual equality, to the Labour men's instinctive rejection of equal opportunities inside their party. Yet there is a universal need, as Robert Dahl, the grand old man of liberal democracy, argues, for equal-opportunity initiatives "well beyond those that even the most democratic states have hitherto brought about".

The British public is more radical than politicians or pundits when it comes to rights and liberties. The MORI "State of the Nation" polls for the Rowntree Reform Trust showed a huge consensus (79 per cent) in favour of a Bill of Rights. But people want social and economic rights as well as conventional civil rights in their bill. The immediate priority is free hospital treatment "within a reasonable time" (88 per cent). But alongside rights to jury trial (77 per cent), to privacy (76 per cent) and peaceful assembly (56 per cent), people choose also the right to join (or not to join) a trade union (75 per cent), a right to rehousing for homeless people (64 per cent), a right to strike and a right to abortion (63 per cent).

People want such rights written down in a single document; 79 per cent agreed with this proposal, with only 5 per cent against. But fewer than one in ten have any faith in the ability of existing institutions to protect our rights. Instead, they want courts made up of a more representative judiciary (40 per cent), or a special constitutional court with lay experts sitting alongside judges (29 per cent).

The Labour Party is finally committed, like the Liberal Democrats, to a conventional Bill of Rights. The interest in a wider rights strategy in both parties is plain; at the recent Labour conference in Brighton, some 40 fringe meetings were concerned with rights of all kinds. But neither party is yet committed to "entrenching" social and economic rights in a law that a hostile government cannot readily remove at a stroke by statute.

The Institute for Public Policy and Research (IPPR), Labour's independent think-tank, has been exploring how to create enforcable "new social rights". Their broad position, based on arguments developed by Raymond Plant, is that "positive" social rights should have the same fundamental status as "negative" political and civil rights, for they give citizens the abilities that give real meaning to liberty. They also agree that social rights should be enforceable by individual citizens. But so far they have fallen short of making them enforceable through a Bill of Rights that is legally protected against the will of government. Instead, they are engaged on a "case-by-case" examination of desirable rights.

One of the many disabilities of the British

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way of misgovernment, is that initiatives of this kind depend almost entirely on the two major parties. For a new rights agenda to be taken seriously in the media, it will first have to be taken seriously by the Labour Party. Roy Hattersley's grand Charter of Rights in 1992 was framed largely to conceal the vacuum on enforceable political and civil rights at its centre. The range of new initiatives, uncoordinated though they were, was real enough. But Hattersley's evidently cynical manoeuvre was dismissed as an irrelevant sham.

The Labour Party still means to enact a broad agenda of rights laws; but so far no Labour frontbencher has articulated the kind of rights philosophy into the package that will give it the practical unity and popular resonance that it needs for success.

Popularising rights in not as easy as it might seem. People might give a high priority to rights in response to a MORI interviewer. But when a Michael Howard argues that the right to silence allows hardened criminals to escape justice, or a high-minded commission proposes reducing the right to jury trial in the interests of a more effective courts system, then simple principles are turned into complicated political issues.

And the Conservatives are always ready to exploit such issues. Tony Blair's opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, carefully practical and principled though it was, was denounced by them as "weakness" in the face of terrorism—a potent political cry. Labour naturally fear such exploitation, and their fear makes them vulnerable; and while Blair has worked hard to neutralise the Conservative "advantage" on crime, his strategy will be severely tested in the next year.

The left has therefore to think hard and seriously about making a reality out of the traditional belief in the public's willingness to come to the defence of civil liberties. As Ronald Dworkin famously argued, the "culture of liberty" in Britain in deficient. One reason for this, historically, has been the decline of the National Council for Civil Liberties into partisan politics. Civil liberties isn't a "clenched fist" issue any more than it is the safe preserve of a liberal establishment.

The revival of NCCL, renamed Liberty, is just one manifestation of a new constituency for a realistic politics of democracy and political freedom. Another is the continuing backing for Charter 88, itself a creation of this magazine, which soon celebrates its fifth birthday with well over 40,000 signatories; and also the IPPR's practical interest in democratic reform and patient, usually unseen, lobbying of the Labour Party and unions.

The origins of Thatcherism were to be found in a similar set of agencies who confidently argued the case for new-right solutions at a time of political crisis. The nature of Britain's crisis has changed, but nonetheless it is greater now than ever. If the centre-left reform bodies can define a new agenda of political and social rights, and the politicians find the words to relate this to popular concerns, then a new -ism may be born. But whose?

Stuart Weir is editor of the "Democratic Audit" and a founder of Charter 88. He is among the speakers at Liberty's Talking Liberties human rights conference at TUC Congress House, Gt Russell St, London W1, on Saturday Nov 13

The Di is cast and **Steve Platt**, our man in the bushes with the hidden lens, bows to peer pressure. Is the outrage against the Mirror all an exercise in hypocrisy?

A zoom with a view

There is talk of boycotts in the air. So I'd like to announce that I won't be renewing my Royal Automobile Club membership this year. I know I should have let it lapse a long time ago—one shouldn't put money into an organisation that is so uncritically supportive of whatever new road scheme the government comes up with. But the news that the RAC—even if its title does bear the appendage *Royal*—has seen fit to withdraw advertising from Mirror Group Newspapers because it disapproves of pictures that the group's papers published of Princess Di working out at a gym has finally prompted me to act.

The RAC, together with windscreen replacement specialists Autoglass, announced its advertising boycott in response to a call by Press Complaints Commission chairman Lord McGregor. On Tuesday he said: "It may be that hypocrisy is so widespread that readers of the *Mirror* will continue reading the newspaper, but I very much hope that advertisers will consider the behaviour of the newspaper and start withdrawing their advertising."

McGregor's statement was unprecedented. Issued before the PCC had met to discuss the matter, and without the Mirror group having been given any opportunity to present its case, it came as a crescendo of criticism from parliament and the press swept in the direction of MGN's Holborn headquarters.

The view of Andrew Brown, chairman of the Advertising Association, may have been more representative of the advertising industry as a whole: "To ask [advertisers] to act in a punitive way . . . is quite inappropriate. It implies it should have some control over editorial content." But it was, almost without exception, the condemnatory, pro-boycott voices that got the hearing. ("The sick whore of Fleet Street," the *Sun* editorialised, in a gloating parody of the *Mirror*'s famous past epithet, "The harlot of Fleet Street", against itself.) And once Lord McGregor had spluttered his call to arms in defence of the Princess's inalienable right to sweat in private (although, it should be noted, she doesn't actually seem to sweat at all—at least not in the published photos), it was all but inevitable that the Mirror group, considering itself to have been "convicted without trial", should have initially decided to pull out of the PCC.

Now it must be said that the *Mirror*'s attempts to add some sort of self-justificatory, public-interest gloss to its photo scoop are a mite threadbare. If "the most amazing pictures you'll ever see", as the *Sunday Mirror*'s front page blazed them, really were published to expose a potential security threat ("It could have been a bomb, not a camera"), why did some of them appear under the heading, "Secret of workouts that shaped curvy Di's sensational new sex appeal"? And if, as *Mirror* woman's editor Fiona McIntosh claimed on Tuesday, the photographs were published "because they gave us a precious insight into the person behind the artifice", why did that same issue of the *Mirror*—after an injunction that prohibited further use of the real Princess Di pictures—run, as part of a "Work out with Diana" feature, half a dozen photos posed by a Di lookalike model?

That said, however, the real smell of hypocrisy this week came not from the *Mirror* readers whom Lord McGregor chose so gratuitously to dismiss, but from the rest of the media that daily makes its living from precisely the sort of populist journalistic endeavour that the Mirror group employed to such effect this week. The BBC, ITV and Sky all used the Diana pictures to illustrate their stories on how terrible the *Mirror* story was. The *Express* even managed to do likewise by running a photograph of the *Sunday Mirror*—being read by Lord McGregor. It is difficult to disagree with the *Mirror*'s description of "a procession of the shabbiest, tawdriest collection of po-faced hypocrites solemnly attacking the Mirror group".

Nor was it only the usual suspects who sang out for the chorus of disapprobation. Ex-*Mirror* editor Roy Greenslade, popped up on television and radio, in the *Guardian* and even in the pages of the *Sun* to lambast his former paper. "There's no time to delay," he wrote, as if he was talking about the siege of Sarajevo or the starving in Angola. "Urge your friends at work, challenge your mates in the pub, contact any advertiser—local or national—to demand that they stop taking the *Mirror* from this morning."

It's the sort of hyperbole that makes me feel like reacting as did the poet Hugh MacDiarmid when the Soviet Union invaded Hungary in 1956. While others were leaving in their droves, he rejoined the Communist Party, offering the explanation that: "You don't abandon an old friend in times of trouble."

Roy and the rest of the pro-boycott ravers should get a grip. What, after all, is so beyond the pale (or "pail", as the *Sun*, quoting Andrew Neil, preferred it on Tuesday) about what the *Mirror* has done? It was a worthless intrusion, doubtless, given all the truly important stories to which it could have devoted its talents and resources. It was stupid timing, perhaps, given the government's desire for a "privacy" law to protect the rich and famous. But the publication of the pictures themselves hardly merits the obloquy that has been heaped upon the editors responsible.

As even Roy Greenslade admitted—in the *Guardian* on Monday, if not in the *Sun* on

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Tuesday, "No one could suggest that these are intimate and compromising portraits. Indeed, if one didn't know otherwise, they almost appear posed. No strain shows on the princess's face. Not a bead of sweat appears on her brow." They are, by common consent, "decent", "tasteful", "flattering", "unrevealing"—in short, everything but "the most amazing pictures you'll ever see".

This is what we are being asked to heap scorn upon the *Mirror* for? *This* represents the supposed nadir of tabloid journalistic practice? *This* is why everyone from Roy Greenslade to the *Daily Mail* to Lord McGregor is screaming "Boycott!"?

It scarcely seems credible. The *Sun* can crow about the needless killing of 362 Argentine sailors under the headline "Gotcha!"—and turn it into an advertising slogan in its current circulation battle with the *Mirror*—and no one outside the ranks of the left and the peace movement raises an eyebrow. The *Daily Star* can print a routine diet of chauvinistic, racist bile and no one even seems to note it. The *Sunday Times* can provide a platform for Nazi apologists and anti-racists struggle to make their outrage heard. But a gym owner sneaks some pictures of a princess and the *Mirror* prints them, and anyone would think the world had been brought tumbling down.

Which I suppose it has, in a way—though the *Mirror* photos are only the latest in a long line of "intrusive" pictures and stories that actually do little more than to show royalty as something resembling what they really are. Princess Anne putting up two fingers to the press, Prince Philip's gaffes about "slanty-eyed orientals", Prince William's "royal wee", when the camera caught him peeing in the playground, the Fergie toe-sucking episode—they all mark stages in the end of that certain sort of world whose inhabitants believe they retain a divine right to both privilege *and* privacy; a world in which they fail to recognise that the price now demanded of their well-paid parts in the royal soap opera is that they are always on stage. If they don't like it—well, they can always quit and let others take their place (and pay).

This space was to have contained reproductions of the front covers of the *Sunday Mirror* and Monday's *Daily Mirror*. For reasons beyond our control we have been unable to publish them

In his book, *Naff off! Confessions of a Fleet Street photographer*, former *Express* photographer Victor Blackman tells of the scoop he obtained some 30 years ago by sitting for days at the top of Westminster cathedral with a 2000m Zoomar lens. Princess Anne had recently joined the Brownies and every paper was after a photo showing her in her Brownie uniform. From the cathedral tower he could see into the Buckingham Palace grounds, albeit from a distance of half a mile. In due course, his patience—and initiative—was rewarded. He got the pictures and awaited the credit from *Express* editor Edward Pickering.

Pickering called him to his office, but instead of praise fixed Blackman with "the most grave and puritanical look I've ever seen". "These pictures," he said, "are the result of gross intrusion. It's disgraceful and, if it weren't for the fact that you thought you were doing it for the good of the paper, you'd be fired immediately." He made Blackman fetch the negatives and prints and burn them.

They don't make editors like that any more—and why should they?

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Bill Clinton is continuing America's war against drugs. But the net effect, reports **Alexander Cockburn**, is to favour the use of hard drugs, not harmless marijuana

America kisses its grass goodbye

Maggie Steber/Select

Floored or flawed? The US drug war is failing to deter inter-city entrepreneurs

Clinton's drug policy, promulgated in October, represents the first such initiative developed by a President who self-confessedly smoked marijuana in the 1960s, allegedly—at least according to certain reports—snorted cocaine in the 1970s and 1980s, and who knows there's more to life than a dry martini. Too bad then that his is a martini-era policy.

President Bill's "drug czar" came to Los Angeles to explain the plan. He attended an event sponsored by the Nation Institute and the American Civil Liberties Union, where I was able to observe him. The czar is Lee Brown, a black man who in earlier incarnations has been police chief in New York and Houston. As expressed in LA, Brown's plan has all the hallmarks of a Clinton package: bracing rhetorical commitment to fundamental change; substantive adherence to business as usual.

The rhetoric pretends a shift from failed "war" to rehab, but much of the substance of Brown's speech was awful. Drug use, he asserted, "creates a culture where employment is scarce". Brown made this preposterous claim in Los Angeles before an audience intimately aware of the local chronology: deindustrialisation of the inner city, particularly in car and tyre production; then metastasis of the drug economy.

Brown also made Nixon/Reagan/Bush-vintage promises to attack the drug menace at source, in the export zones of Latin America and elsewhere. Governments there, he said, would be given all assistance to combat the cartels. This, of course, is simply a pledge of more money and arms for America's house Nazis scattered through the Latin American military. For those dubious about the prowess of US education, the "Weekly News Update" of the Nicaragua Solidarity Committee discloses this month that Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Michael Francois, chief of police in Haiti, was trained at the US Army's School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia—the same school that trained Manuel Noriega, Roberto d'Aubuisson and 19 of the 27 Salvadorean officers implicated in the 1989 murder of a group of Jesuits.

Czar Brown took pains to declare that the legalisation of drugs would be "the moral equivalent of genocide of black people". This is a line borrowed from Charles Rangel, the congressman for Harlem. President Bill is also hot against legalisation, claiming that it was a salutory spell in prison on cocaine charges that redeemed his brother Roger.

The official story is that the cops in Arkansas came to Governor Bill and said they were staking out Roger. Governor Bill urged them forward. The story is used in evidence of the uplifting fact that Governor Bill chose law over loyalty. What a guy!

What probably went through Governor Bill's mind was that the cops were wired and waiting for him to say, "Maybe we should give Roger another chance", or hoping he'd sneak off to a public phone to give Roger the tip-off.

A questioner in Los Angeles—a feisty Asian-American of bohemian aspect—rushed to the microphone and asked Czar Brown why he was uttering all this bosh about interdicting drugs from overseas when everyone knew that the US government was up to its neck in drug trafficking in south-east Asia, Afghanistan, Panama and elsewhere. Brown put on a worthy face and said that if the questioner had any *compelling* evidence of such US government activities, then he should come to the czar and place the facts before him, and an investigation would promptly follow.

The next day, 24 October, the newspapers disclosed that Drug Enforcement Agency officials at the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince were informing the Haitian military about arriving drug shipments as part of a coordinated strategy of interception. Here's a case made for Czar Brown. It is acknowledged that, before Aristide's election, the Haitian military ran drugs into the country from Latin America and then to the US mainland or across the border into the Dominican Republic. Estimated value of business: as much as $500 million per year. The former DEA resident liaison officer, Tony Greco, has reported that Aristide did commence a crackdown, in cooperation with the DEA, which says cocaine seizures plummeted after Aristide was ousted. With his eviction, the military picked up where it left off, threatening Greco when it deemed him overly intrusive for having initiated the arrest of an army narcotics intelligence officer. With the huge sums gathered from the drug trade, the military is better

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equipped to withstand any embargo.

So Czar Brown should ask: why doesn't the United States clamp down on the drug trade into Haiti? As Representative John Conyers put it, if the coast guard can pick up every fishing boat filled with its pathetic cargo of refugees, why not the planes and boats nourishing the military? The presumptive answer, as envisaged by the people at Fort Benning, is that the United States prefers the military and Colonel Francois to the popular forces behind Aristide.

Dennis Hopper described to the LA conference his own exciting days in drug madness, putting *Amanita muscaria* at the start of the menu. As often happens with those who have given up drugs and drink, Hopper's eyes shone with fond reminiscence of excess, in contrast to his punctilious citation of clean living under the spartan regime of the 12-step programme of America's most successful social programme, the private, free, Alcoholics Anonymous.

I was hoping he would give a detailed account of how he fared with *Amanita muscaria*, the fly-agaric hallucinogen whose brilliant red cap, speckled with white, brightens the woody hillsides round my house in Humboldt County, Northern California, this time of year, living in mycorrhizal intimacy with pine and fir. (Best not to try it.)

In his classic *Soma, Divine Mushroom of Immortality*, in which he seeks to demonstrate that this mushroom was the "Soma" of the ancient Aryan religion, R Gordon Wasson describes how early Uralic and Siberian tribes would have their shaman eat the dried *Amanita* and then would quaff his urine, which would pass on the hallucinogenic properties in diluted form.

After his 15-minute speech and brief interchange with the audience, Brown was gone from the downtown theatre. In his wake, another police veteran remarked informally that the czar's substantive powers are tiny and that Brown was already confessing privately that in bureaucratic battles with behemoths such as the DEA he had already lost.

The career of the DEA tells the whole story. Back when the "war on drugs" began, in the late 1960s, there were two federal agencies enforcing the drug laws on a total budget of less than $10 million. Today there are 54, including the DEA, National Security Army, Internal Revenue Service, Defense Intelligence Agency, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, State Department, Customs, Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines; and the overall budget is $13 billion, of which more than $100 million goes to the DEA alone.

None of this has had any noticeable impact on drug importation, distribution or consumption. Decline in casual drug use among the middle classes has had more to do with fashion or health than enforcement. Indeed, from the first moment, in 1969, that Nixon's Operation Intercept prompted smugglers to shift from bulky marijuana bales—the "square grouper" beloved of Florida fisherfolk—to the more compact cocaine, the war has failed, except in its impact on constitutional protections and guarantees.

Every fall in Northern California, where marijuana vies with grapes to be the state's largest cash crop, we see US army helicopters used in police raids on marijuana gardens in open violation of the Posse Comitatus Act. The Fourth Amendment, on unlawful searches and seizures, is routinely trashed.

On 8 October, California's Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (Camp) ended its 1993 season claiming 51 arrests, 575 raids and 66,386 plants confiscated throughout the state. The Humboldt County Marijuana Eradication Team (Met), which has participants from the state's Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement and the DEA, claimed approximately 95,000 plants in 1993, including those listed in the Camp totals. Humboldt County (why this terrain was named after a gay German explorer who never visited it is unclear to me) surrendered 39,851 plants to the combined predations of Camp and Met in August and September alone.

Every fall in Northern California, marijuana vies with grapes to be the state's largest cash crop

Values attaching to these hauls are wildly inflated. The drug cops will value a six-inch male plant the same as a 12-foot female plant. The female plant offers the marketable buds. Males are culled, so the females are not pollinated, hence the name *sinsemilla*, "without seeds".

Back in the early 1980s, before Camp and Met began their war, the county sheriffs would seize about 50,000 plants a year and make 40 to 50 arrests. This was achieved with a handful of local deputies and one fixed-wing plane.

But the marijuana plants back in those laxer times were grown in full sun, could reach a height of 12 feet and yielded up to a pound of processed marijuana. Now growers are forced to cultivate in shaded areas to avoid detection from low-flying helicopters. Thus, a plant today might furnish an average of an ounce, even less from an indoor plant. Mel Pearlston of the Pacific Justice Center in the Humboldt County town of Redway, who defends people charged with marijuana cultivation, tells me that it's not uncommon to find several thousand plants in an indoor grow and, though the government claims they yield the same as a full-size plant flourishing amid the blaze of noon, the truth is that it may take dozens of these foot-tall plants to produce a pound of processed buds.

The government points to the raised price of marijuana—$2,000 a pound to the grower in the early 1980s, about $4,500 now—as evidence of a successful crackdown. But where the government has had success is in stopping imports of marijuana from Mexico and South America and of Thai sticks from Asia. Smugglers now specialise in cocaine or heroin.

So enforcement has acted as a price support for domestic producers, in a fine example of import substitution, courtesy of the small farmer hailed in song and story. The "war" has merely shifted production towards hi-tech indoor cultivation. Pearlston's view is that the true function of the war on drugs has been to test the nation's tolerance for intrusive law-enforcement techniques, whether in Humboldt County or in South Central LA.

Straightforward legalisation, urged by many respectable citizens, has one unremarked flaw. In peasant economies across the world, in the Andean nations, in Southeast Asia, not to mention rural counties in California, cultivation of marijuana, coca or the opium poppy is either the main or sole economic standby. Often there are no realistic alternatives in an era when commodity prices have plunged.

Similarly, in today's blighted inner cities, there are no realistic economic strategies to substitute for the drug commerce, which is often the only rational career choice for urban youth. Certainly the tycoon impresarios of "Rebuild LA", the Corporate Programme evolved after last year's riots, have come up with no alternative. Under the current terms of society, legalisation would mean government licensing of monopolies to large corporations that would swiftly wipe out small producers and vendors.

A better answer would be to decriminalise drugs, apply the sort of fines and penalties attached to parking, speeding and drunken behaviour, declare the war over and move on.

In today's inner cities, there are no realistic economic strategies to substitute for drug commerce

A final thought about abstinence, such as prescribed by 12-step programmes and rehab schedules. What is it in America's soul that demands total conversions? People have to be booze-free or even sex-free. Why not retain all these delightful underpinnings to the human journey in amounts sufficient to uplift but not destroy?

In another manifestation of this absolutism, today's *bien-pensant* youth are so brainwashed by the PC crowd that they barely dare embark on the sexual act, lest it somehow be construed as disrespect for womanhood. I made a joke about the ultra-feminist Catharine MacKinnon's steed, "Horse Boy", being a gelding the other day and letters poured in denouncing me for fearing "a strong woman" ("ball-eater" was one odd honorific applied to la MacKinnon). The reproofs came largely from men, doubtless reading their letters self-righteously to their helpmeets in hopes of an encouraging pat on the head. Then, letter snuggled in those epicene waist pouches, they hop virtuously down to the post office. Suppose I'd said that "presumably MacKinnon's Horse Boy was a stallion"?

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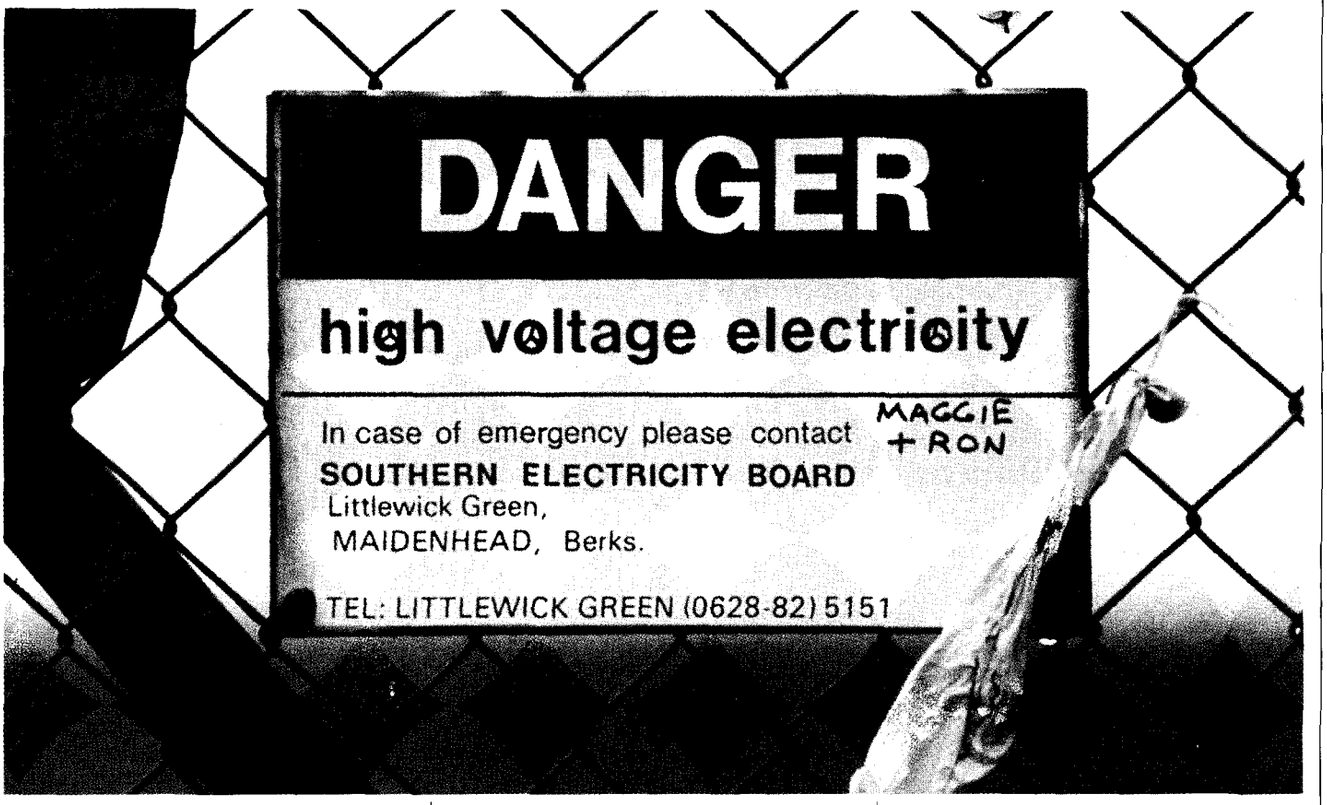
Ten years after the arrival of cruise missiles and CND's biggest ever demonstrations, **Diana Shelley** looks at the achievements of the 1980s peace movement

What have we done?



Julian Simmonds/Select

In the early 1980s, I was sometimes invited to speak to local CND groups about the movement "last time round". After my speech, the first question was predictable: "Why did CND fail?" Resisting the temptation to answer with another question, "What makes you think it has failed?", I would try to answer the question: "Why did support decline?" (Reasons: our powerlessness during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, the partial success of the partial test ban treaty in 1963, the election of a Labour government in 1964, and simply that people got tired, not a reason often admitted in political debate.)

But how do you judge success or failure? Peace is the issue where success has never yet been achieved. Peace doesn't break out because a room full of men sign a piece of paper, as I believed it would when I was 15. Peace is a process not an event—and in any case would you believe those men? Things get better, or things get worse, and for different people. And the mass peace movements have not generally been for peace, but against specific weapons or wars. So the question of success or failure here is a narrower one: what did the nuclear disarmament movement—only part of the peace movement—achieve?

Cause and effect in political activity is never a straightforward process. Enemies of the nuclear disarmament movement deny that the last 13 years' activity has had any effect—it would all have happened anyway. Correspondingly, we could be tempted to feel directly responsible for all moves towards disarmament, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the collapse of communist regimes. The answer is more complex: the factors that go into any historical process or event, and the way they interact, are too complex to be pinned down—and, whatever we did, Bush was never likely to send CND a congratulatory telegram even if Gorbachev, clearly influenced by the peace movement, might.

We are left with our opinions. My own is that we have some significant achievements to show for more than a decade of the revived nuclear disarmament movement—more significant than those of the 1960s. One experienced campaigner I asked has her own, crisp, answer: we got precisely what we demanded—no cruise, no Pershing, no SS20s, just as in the 1960s the motivating demand to end atmospheric testing was also won. But the vitality of any movement depends on celebrating what success we have; campaigning without winning is very hard work and profoundly affects the numbers doing it.

There's one obvious achievement, the one that my questioners of the early 1980s consistently dismissed. We are still here. CND is only one organisation in one country, and membership of CND is only one indicator, but it is worth noting that current national membership is more than half (51,380) what it was in the peak year of 1984 (100,000). Many organisations in decline would be glad to say as much. No, not all those members are active (nor have many of the most committed campaigners ever joined CND), but their subscriptions fund an organisation that still informs, lobbies and campaigns.

I remember how thankful I was in 1980 that CND had even a two-room office with three workers, a journal and a filing system: it provided an organisational base from which a movement could flow without new activists wasting energy reinventing it. The current CND is rather more secure, with nearly 20 staff in London and the regions. And much of the research, information and lobbying work is done by other organisations established in the 1980s, such as Basic (British Atlantic Security Council) and Vertic (Verification Technology Information Council). The emphasis may be rather more on lobbying and picketing, but we're still ready for the upturn.

Have the activists gone away? The recent rally for a nuclear-free world had the atmosphere of a revival meeting, full of old comrades still busy. Although the numbers are down and the faces more lined, there is still a wide range of specific campaigns and a firmer grounding in global politics (including support for Mordechai Vanunu, the Western Shoshone nation and the total test-ban treaty, and even getting nuclear weapons declared illegal, as well as

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opposition to Trident, nuclear power and proliferation). And, just as happened in the 1960s, a generation has been created which is not afraid to campaign, whether it is forming support groups in the miners' strike or the resistance at Twyford Down.

A strength of the nuclear disarmament movement over the past 13 years has been a far more politicised and sophisticated approach than the "first wave", with its moral message and sometimes simplistic post-imperialist unilateralism.

This is not to say that unilateralism is mistaken, but that the political process is more complicated than "Britain giving a lead": Britain has not after all been a party to such gains as the INF treaty. The moves towards nuclear disarmament have also been initiated unilaterally, particularly by the Soviet Union in the person of Gorbachev, but we have failed dismally to make any progress in Britain's unilateral renunciation of "the Bomb"; even the axe-swinging at the tactical air to surface missile (TASM) has economic crisis written on it, rather than any moral or even strategic change of heart in the British government.

This time round, though we have still denounced "the politicians", we have gritted our teeth and taught ourselves exactly what these weapons are, campaigned with local councils and made legal submissions to nuclear power station inquiries. We have learnt more about other people and how to talk to them.

Where anything smacking of a transitional demand in the 1960s tended to be roundly denounced, this time we have not been afraid to look quite calmly at programmes for disarmament, even if some of us stopped off at conventional "defensive" defence, while others pressed on down the road to no defence but non-violent civilian resistance. So the work of the Alternative Defence Commission, developing a programme for non-nuclear defence, provoked interested debate rather than howls of horror, even if its decision not to call for Britain's immediate withdrawal from Nato was disputed.

A significant moment in the revival of the movement in Britain in 1980 was the formation of END and the launch of its appeal linking disarmament with human rights, east and west. END has, with some justice, been accused of making the movement too Eurocentric. And yet it was Europe that was projected as the "theatre" of those theatre nuclear weapons. We were at risk from cruise and Pershing and SS20s, and the good precept of thinking globally and acting locally does not just mean acting in solidarity with the peoples of the Pacific. It meant acting here, now, at Greenham and Molesworth and even in Whitehall. Across Europe, this was what we did and, to a quite startling degree, END's short-term programme was achieved.

END had its critics, many over the even-handed way opprobrium was poured on both blocs. Others, like myself, were put off by the elitist and undemocratic structure of British END, with its coteries of "Euro-intellectuals". Edward Thompson's theory of exterminism—that the arms race between the two blocs had acquired its own momentum beyond any logic of politics—was never popular. It was Thompson's polemic, rather than his theory, that inspired. It is, in any case, easier to campaign against the visible and the

Marjorie Thompson steps down as chair of CND this weekend after three years in the job. Contrary to what the critics say, it was all worthwhile, she argues

No regrets

I am proud of what CND has achieved in the past few years. Many people thought that the end of the cold war would bring a period of growing peace and, automatically, a reduction in nuclear weapons. Newspapers and magazines questioned CND's reasons for keeping going. But we didn't give up—and subsequent events have proved us right.

Far from ushering in a safer world, the end of the cold war has meant new dangers to peace from regional conflicts. This was made particularly clear in the 1990-91 Gulf crisis and war, which saw the biggest threat in recent history of the use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

CND led the movement against the Gulf war in what was arguably the most pro-military atmosphere in any of the coalition countries. Even US President George Bush acknowledged protest as an American civil right: here the peace movement was denounced and threatened. But hundreds of thousands took to the streets, and CND had its first membership increase since 1986, when the bombing of Libya and the Chernobyl disaster alarmed the public. And all this despite the prophets of doom in our own movement, in *Tribune* and elsewhere.

Of course, CND has also maintained the pressure for nuclear disarmament, campaigning for a comprehensive test-ban treaty and against Britain's Trident nuclear submarine programme, making clear its relevance to global nuclear proliferation. Every politician proclaims the importance of non-proliferation these days—but, with the exception of the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, none is prepared to recognise that Trident *is* proliferation, even if the number of warheads carried is no more than with Polaris. The whole of the political establishment labours under the illusion that Britain is still a great power, with Trident its ticket to the top table—even though the "independent deterrent" consists of missiles leased from the US and submarines serviced in King's Bay, Georgia. CND still has a crucial role in getting the politicians and the public to give up their delusions. Nuclear disarmament begins at home, and for us that means continuing to protest against Trident at Barrow-in-Furness, where the submarines are being built, and at Faslane and Coulport, where they will be based.

And then there is the peace dividend. Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind's carefully orchestrated media campaign produced predictable squeals about the impact of cuts in defence spending. But the reality is that the size of the British military budget and the importance of the defence industrial sector have warped the British economy, leading to chronic underinvestment in civil manufacturing. CND has taken the peace dividend seriously since it was first mooted. If Britain reallocated the resources consumed by military spending, it could not only increase industrial investment, but could plan for a better quality of life—National Health Service beds available when people need them, properly equipped schools and decent, reasonably priced public transport.

I'm often asked: "Why hasn't CND done anything about Bosnia?" The CND council's position is one of non-intervention and, as there is no clear nuclear connection (unlike in the Gulf), there is a general feeling that developing a formal policy would detract from our central focus. I don't see that it's our job to answer Labour MPs who have scorned our anti-nuclear demonstrations in the past, now that they want us out on the streets.

I have my regrets about the past few years. We were unable to mount a European Nuclear Disarmament convention in Glasgow. And we never got our joint project with the Atlantic Council, the Proliferation Papers, to be chaired (neutrally) by Jeremy Paxman, off the ground.

But we have never lost our sense of purpose. There are still peace camps at Faslane and at Menwith Hill, the US listening station in Yorkshire. More than 1,500 people came to the recent rally for a nuclear-free world in Westminster Hall. Increasingly, the peace movement is coming to realise that, as Martin Luther King put it, peace is not just the absence of tension, but the presence of justice—that the key point is not arms control, or managing the next stage of the arms race, but changing the world.

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local: most activists were better able to march to Trafalgar Square or surround Greenham than try to end exterminism by making links with groups in Moscow.

But as a transnational movement, embodied in the END conventions, END was vital, with a major role to play in supporting the independent groups in eastern Europe. It gave hope to a generation of activists that we really could start to act as if the borders had gone.

An unexpected force in the movement, and more upsetting to some "old" campaigners, was the women's peace movement, exemplified but not wholly created at Greenham. (How irritating it was to be asked, as I leafleted in the street, if I were "a Greenham woman", when my roots as a feminist in the peace movement went back years before 1981.) Greenham women had a genius for the unexpected, for imagination and invention. They inspired a whole wave of activity that both delighted and disgusted, but above all caught public imagination and moved thousands to act.

I remember briefing groups before the Greenham blockade in December 1982 that consisted almost entirely of women for whom this direct action was their first demonstration of any kind. The women's peace movement shocked and outraged—including many male activists, for whom the other hundred-odd bases were not enough without wanting their piece of Greenham too—but inspired actions around Britain and in many other countries.

One of the arguments that did not have to be run again was that between conventional demonstrations and actions that broke or ignored the law. The 1960s movement had been riven by this, formalised in the Committee of 100 split from CND, but civil disobedience and direct action in the 1980s and 1990s became, to an extent, just another, more dramatic form of campaigning available to any activist who dared.

This was one of the legacies of the 1960s: the direct actionists moved on to community issues, and their techniques became embedded in the social fabric. Perhaps because such acts were so well assimilated, I have not, this time, heard the political arguments fully being put for doing them in a supposed parliamentary democracy. Indeed, those who sat down in Grosvenor Square or blockaded air bases could acquire sometimes disproportionate kudos: at some CND conferences it seemed almost as if candidates had only to be in jail or to wave a bit of airbase wire around to find themselves elected—as if being a dab hand with the bolt cutters guaranteed organisational skills.

Both direct action or civil disobedience are dynamic forms of action, and it was a strength of the wider movement that they were so well integrated into it. But in the context of an overwhelming defence system—so much hardware, so many sites—however large, these acts could only be symbolic. We didn't stop cruise arriving, but the number of bums plonked down in Whitehall indicated a nation at least divided against it. We didn't stop cruise deployment, but the commitment and daring of cruisewatchers showed the convoys could never melt unseen into this countryside. And now cruise has gone.

There were other victories along the way: the Nuclear Free Zones (NFZ) movement may also have been largely symbolic, but it helped to create a firm basis for local action—the strength of any mass movement.

The cancellation of the 1982 civil defence exercise, Hard Rock—for fear that too few local authorities would participate to make it credible—was an early high point, and links with council workers, "creative compliance" with the Civil Defence Regulations and the solidarity of an international NFZ movement combined to make civil defence a dead issue, long before disarmament reached the table.

All this has been in the face of a government implacably opposed to peace activity, and ready with a variety of sly, mean and dishonest ways to undermine it. We were incapable of making any dent in the armour of the Iron Lady or of her successor. What dents we made in Labour Party policy have been beaten smooth again, with such ludicrous hairsplitting as how many warheads should be deployed on Trident—as if 128 warheads would make Scotland less of a target than 512.

The 1983 election did not just reveal the British people's deeply irrational adherence to 19th-century gunboat nationalism. The Labour Party failed to grasp that non-nuclear defence is not just the absence of nuclear weapons, but defence of a totally different kind.

The issues had to be campaigned for on completely different ground: as the promotion of a real defence policy and the abandonment of the most expensive suicide note in history. The party is now left beached like a dying whale, with a commitment to an "independent" nuclear deterrent wholly at odds with the dynamic of east-west detente. Just who do they think is about to nuke us?

When I consider what difference we have made, I sometimes succumb to what could be called a nightmare of causality. Did our actions lead not just to the INF treaty, to detente, to the fall of the Berlin Wall? Or, through the dissolution of just one superpower, did they also lead to the break-up of the Soviet Union, to Boris Yeltsin, the banning of local councils and the young Russians with cellphones playing the market while old women beg in the streets? To racist attacks in Rostock? To the siege of Sarajevo, "ethnic cleansing", the killing, the camps? Is it our fault?

We were not the only actors on the scene. If our demands for detente had been followed, the destruction of the blocs might have been achieved consciously, not, as it has been, with the political break-up of one and the continued dominance of the other. We *might* have been looking for a real new world order.

It is easy to ask "what if?" of history. But I am still the custodian of the banner of a slightly fictitious group: historians for the right to work. The banner demands "a continuing supply of history". That seems to have been achieved.

There is no peace, but there has been some disarmament, a step back from the nuclear brink. We take a breath: some of us leave to do other things. We take another breath: we can begin again. In 1980, Edward Thompson urged us to feel our strength. We did make a difference. We can still.

Diana Shelley is a journalist who used to work for CND

What is the Labour Party doing about defence? **Ben Webb** finds David Clark MP keen to avoid conflict

Realms of defence

Fifteen months into his job as Labour defence spokesperson, David Clark gets annoyed at the suggestion that he has been keeping a low profile. Out comes a box of press releases, the hard evidence that he has been a diligent sniper at a government all at sea. "We're more confident now," he says, "and we can take them on."

But how? "The world has changed dramatically," he explains. "That is obvious to everyone except our British government, and therefore I think we have to rethink our whole defence policy. We stand four-square by the notion that, whatever is required to defend Britain, Labour will provide. But we do not need to spend as much on defence, although the criteria for reductions must be on a defence basis, not on the Treasury's whim."

Clark is vague, however, as to where the cuts should fall, pleading inadequate information. "Obviously it doesn't make sense for us to give up a capability that we are unique in Nato in providing," he says. "Just now, I simply don't know. But there are things to examine: do we actually need aircraft stationed in Germany, especially as it seems they have no immediate forward role? And the Rapid Reaction Force: we need to re-examine that role—it was all very well to jump in and say yes we'll take the lead, but things have changed. And in a sense, although it's still a vital part of our defence policy, the defence of Britain obviously isn't under as immediate a threat as it may have been in the past 40 years."

In line with this, Clark says that he is keen on "diversification" of defence industries. Clark undertook a "trawl of the literature" on defence conversion a year ago, and set out his agenda in a report in July. Although it is more than the government has done, it is a modest programme: "Labour has already made it clear that there is no question of forcing companies to diversify." That established, says Clark, "there is already quite a lot going on, but in spite of the government."

A Defence Diversification Agency, to be attached to the MoD, is still part of Labour's plans, he goes on, but the ambitions for defence conversion have been downscaled, to use a military Americanism. "Tanks into tractors" is out: the approach now "is to look at high-technology products already being made, and find civilian uses". Clark mentions a Thomson sonar system being adapted for use on fish farms, and suggests that Britain

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"look to the best examples" of this technology-transfer approach, citing the US Defence Conversion Commission (DCC) as a model.

There is a problem here: the DCC's "blue-ribbon panel" began in the flush of George Bush's "New World Order" and ended as a damp squib. Its director was sacked for recommending direct intervention in industry, and the appendices to its final report appear to have gone missing somewhere inside the Beltway. It did manage to spend US$1.5 billion, however, in an exercise one critic described as "cheerleading".

The new US administration's second take on arms conversion is more likely what Clark is referring to. Some US$20 billion is to be allocated to states, local governments and "partnerships" with industry. But most of this will be spent on retraining and redundancy settlements, and the outlook for job replacement is fair to gloomy.

There is, of course, another variety of "diversification" that is far less painful to the arms producer than to the "end-use" consumer; and that is the arms trade. According to the government's figures, Britain is now the world's second-largest arms exporter, a fact that Clark finds worrying, but in the end a matter for good judgment.

He is against "back-channel" arms transfers. It should all be out in the open—"otherwise you end up in front of the Scott Inquiry". He runs down his mental checklist. Sales to allies: no problem. Sales to friendly governments, such as Saudi Arabia: all right. As for British Aerospace's proposed sale of Hawk ground-attack planes ("trainers") to Indonesia, where the military dictatorship is actively suppressing occupied East Timor, Clark is in favour. South-east Asia needs a stronger security system, he says, and Indonesia must be a part of it. This is clearly not the happiest part of the job for Clark. "I'd like a world where there was no war, and no weapons," he says. "But I find it difficult to take a purely moral, or moralistic stand."

He is more comfortable with the European Fighter Aircraft, the £20-billion joint programme that the German government has tried repeatedly to shoot down, but which the combined RAF, Luftwaffe and aerospace lobby have rescued again and again. Once sceptical about the EFA's usefulness, he was persuaded by a visit to the British Aerospace plant of its military and employment benefits.

Clark can persuade as well as be persuaded. To the 20 or so Campaign Group rebels that want the now-traditional Labour Party conference resolution on arms spending cuts expressed by the front bench, he is selling the good things: arms conversion and the UN. He muses aloud: "Only one of them is an out-and-out pacifist." Clark evidently keeps his ear to the ground in the PLP, and is keen to tell this raucous constituency that everything has changed. "I tell people that they have to trust me," he says. "The big debates of the 1980s are almost entirely irrelevant today." As for Trident, the biggest bone of contention in the eighties, "I wouldn't scrap it. By the time there is a Labour government, all four boats will have been built. The savings from scrapping it would be negligible."

"I'm not saying that we'll use Trident. I don't think we would. We just need it there as a standing reminder"

He then takes a half-step back from Gerald Kaufman's promise before the last election that Britain would keep its nuclear arms as long as anyone else had them. "If there is a Start 3, we should look at participating." He is impressed with what Les Aspin, the US defence secretary, has said about internationalising nuclear weapons—"but that's looking 25 years ahead". And he agrees that "it is difficult to argue out a particular role for Trident", although he is concerned about "some Mediterranean states". He mentions that Libya is now thought to be capable of firing missiles to the south of France.

"I'm not saying that we'll use Trident," he says somewhat excitedly. "I don't think we would. We just need it there as a standing reminder." And what after Trident? "I wouldn't think there'd be any case for an independent nuclear deterrent after Trident."

On Bosnia, Clark toes the familiar Labour line of rejecting calls to face down what critics insist is Serbian aggression. "I basically think it's impossible to sort out," he says. "It may have been possible 18 months ago, but I share the view that there was premature recognition of Bosnia, that it hadn't been thought through, and that without thinking it through you set the boundaries in concrete. Having been there, on one occasion behind the Serbs' lines . . . it's just a nightmare situation.

"The Muslims are the people who have been most badly done by. There's no doubt on that. But my view at this stage is that we must be even-handed. There have been dastardly crimes there, and there needs to be a war crimes tribunal set up. I believe that all three parties will be hauled before that, and all three parties will be found guilty of terrible genocide. I accept the point that the Muslims have been worst done to. And they're lovely people—the Muslims are the friendliest people you can meet there. But I don't think it has been all one-way traffic.

"Reluctantly I've come to the same view as David Owen and Gerhard Stoltenberg. They're the experts. The only way is to have three statelets. These people will not be able to live together. But I'm not as pessimistic as some: over the next 20 or 30 years, the states may be drawn back into a federation. And the Muslims have got most of the industry . . ."

But can an aggressor not be identified? "Well, yes, the Serbs started the aggression. Whether they were provoked is another matter. What concerns me more than anything else is that I don't think the British press has been even-handed about this. Some of the misreporting worries me." He mentions an incident from his stay near Gorazde, when the BBC reported a Serb offensive that it now acknowledges did not take place.

He crosses the room and produces a sheaf of correspondence on the incident. He has received an apology from the BBC, he reports. The point seems fair enough. Then he brings up another incident from the same sheaf of papers—the infamous bread-queue massacre in Sarajevo's Vase Miskina in May. The atrocity was initially blamed on the Serbs, but the matter quickly grew murky as the Serbs proceeded to accuse the Bosnian government of stage-managing a slaughter of their own civilians. The aim, it was alleged, was to gain sympathy—and foreign intervention—with a high-profile provocation. Subsequently, doubt was cast on this story—but Clark is adamant: he has the word of Lewis Mackenzie, the Canadian general who commanded the UN forces at the time, and who since retirement has done some international lobbying for the Serbs. Mackenzie gives the incident an open verdict. And he, we must assume, is the "expert".

Clark is a great one for believing what "experts" tell him, an alarming trait because defence is eminently the brief for a person with an acute cant-detector. Then again, Clark's credulousness is of little concern to the Labour leadership, which sees foreign affairs and defence essentially as a matter of party management. The key task for Clark is to avoid argument—and he is brilliantly suited to it. The problem is that the real world demands more.

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The Tories' own double whammy

It is Kenneth Clarke's bad luck to be a "political" Chancellor when his predecessor has given him so little room to manoeuvre. The budget, on 30 November, is going to be the event of the autumn because it will combine tax and spending for the first time. But was the move to merge the two really wise?

Norman Lamont announced the move to a unified budget before the last election. He did so with great pride during his budget speech in March 1992, just as John Major was preparing to go to the country. At the time, the Tories were presenting themselves as the natural party of government, ruling by consensus, with the interests of everyone at heart. It seemed very sensible, as Lamont said, to "enable spending plans to be considered alongside the tax plans needed to pay for them".

There was, of course, a political sub-text to this. Central to the Tories' successful election campaign was the claim that Labour never costed its spending commitments. Ministers went into overdrive, warning that the public was going to be hit by Labour's "tax bombshell". Lamont naturally wanted to contrast Labour's extravagance with his own financial prudence.

It was short-term thinking on his part. For the past 14 years, the Tories have always successfully managed to engender economic optimism around election time. The feel-good factor was particular evident during the 1987 general election, after Nigel Lawson knocked 2p off the basic rate of income tax.

For years, the polling organisation MORI has kept a fascinating quarterly record of responses to the question: "Do you think that the general economic condition of the country will improve, stay the same, or get worse over the next 12 months?" Nine times out of ten, people say it will worsen. Month after month, MORI's charts record a series of minus figures on the economic optimism index—with a few notable exceptions. Spring 1983, spring 1987 and spring 1992, for instance.

As ministers are coming to realise (and seasoned campaigners at Conservative Central Office realised long ago), Lamont casually removed the Tories' traditional election launching-pad. No government is going to call an election in midwinter. Come the spring, the danger is that voters will have already discounted any loose change that might come their way on 1 April.

The delay between the budget and the start of the financial year has another downside to it. The public will have several months to stew over unpopular measures before they take effect. Remember Christchurch and Newbury? What chance a government victory in a spring by-election?

It is bad enough for the Tories that Lamont passed on to Clarke the never-ending headache of VAT on fuel. It has been hanging over the government for eight months already, and is not supposed to come into force at the full 17.5 per cent rate until April 1995. No wonder Clarke has been toying with the idea of forcing the pace and introducing it all at once. In future, the new unified budget will institutionalise delay.

So that is one good reason for regretting the new system. But that is not all. For the moment, the Tories are constrained by the looming £50-billion hole in the public finances. They are having to raise taxes and hold down public spending simultaneously. The right hand is behaving in the same way as the left.

Given the choice, however, most Tories, particularly those on the No Turning Back right, would like to cut public spending in order to bring down taxes. For them, there is a virtue in the state spending less, and individuals having more money in their pockets to do as they wish.

With the unified budget, Lamont casually removed the Tories' traditional election launching-pad

The unified budget could make this notion more difficult to sell to voters. On the whole, people will not want to know that their tax cuts are being financed by cuts in the welfare state (or, depending on their political views, by cuts in defence). J K Galbraith's contented majority might start to feel a little more altruistic. Under the old system, it was easy to persuade people as winter approached that the economic outlook was glooomy and spending cuts were called for. By the spring, the government could then turn round and say: "We're through the woods, now. Here's your reward."

Major's "back to basics" crusade, which he wants to carry forward to the next general election, is going to compound this problem. The Howard-Lilley-Portillo axis considers cuts in welfare to be more than a means of saving money, although they are all for that. They have another far more ambitious aim: to change people's behaviour by reducing the state's safety net.

For an overview, it is worth looking again at the No Turning Back pamphlet, *Who benefits?*, published in July by Tory backbenchers. They want the provident to opt-out of the state pension, unemployment and invalidity benefit. But people will only be persuaded to go private when the alternative becomes too awful to contemplate—in other words, when cuts in welfare really start to bite.

We can already see a glimpse of this in the leaked cabinet paper on lone parents, obtained by the *Guardian*, which proposes restricting their payments, and in Michael Portillo's suggestion on ITV's *Walden* at the weekend that the 21st-century state will not be able to go on paying pensions as now (a paper by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation disputes this, but that is another matter).

As Portillo said, reducing the share of national income spent by the state may at times be a "bumpy ride". It will be that much bumpier if it is accompanied by tax hand-outs. VAT at 17.5 per cent is way too high; but would you want it reduced at the price of a freeze in pensions? Or, would you want your taxes reduced to 20 per cent—the government's long-term ambition—while child benefit and payments to single mothers are cut?

As the polls suggest, people want to have it all: low taxes and a decent welfare state. Sooner or later, under the unified budget, the Tories are going to force them to make a choice. It could turn out to be the saviour of the welfare state. It could even be a boon for a tax-raising Labour government, which should be able to indicate what the money is being spent on without succumbing to the perils of hypothecation.

This cannot be what Norman Lamont intended. But, even on his own terms, the unified budget has its problems. Nigel Lawson is very dismissive of the idea in his memoirs, *The View from No 11*. "Although the intention is laudable, it is by no means obvious that the outcome of the proposed reform will be better decision-making," he writes.

The problem is two-fold, according to Lawson. First, it is difficult enough as to is to gauge accurately the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. Bringing the forecast forward by four months will make decisions on taxation that much more of a shot in the dark.

Second, the unified budget will impose "an immense burden of work on the Chancellor of the day and his top officials". A weary Ken Clarke might like to convey his grateful thanks to Norman Lamont.

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SIDELINERS

It is not often that an old Etonian, longstanding right-wing Tory loyalist and former cabinet minister and company chairman qualifies for an NSS halo. But the sardonic but shrewd Lord Peyton should be considered, after three times kicking the government's shins over BR bids and railway pensions. While the Lords contains twice as many Conservative peers as all the other parties put together, there is a hallowed place for such a man. He can not only speak his own mind, but can also lead other Tories in rebellion, defeating the government repeatedly in a mainly hereditary upper house they should be able to control.

Lord Peyton's most recent resistance to government arm-twisting was all the more admirable when contrasted with the pitiful half-dozen Tory MPs from commuter-dominated constituencies who briefly raised their doubts about the Railways Bill, but capitulated the moment Transport Secretary John MacGregor feigned sympathy.

Better known as John Peyton, the former MP for Yeovil 1951-83, Lord Peyton of Yeovil feels sure the railway system will deteriorate under the new Railways Act. He described its weaknesses with brutal clarity when he first ensured the government's defeat by 38 votes in July, on an amendment to enable BR to bid for franchises. That debate disclosed that almost no peer with transport knowledge thought BR's half-privatisation could work. He fought, too, to keep BR's pensions from a covetous Treasury.

Lord Peyton could lead his colleagues because of his background of Tory loyalism. Edward Heath's transport secretary 1970-74, he then toyed with allowing BR to keep the tracks and signalling, while allowing private franchises to operate. He rejected the scheme as unworkable. He has not changed his mind.

He cannot be dismissed as purely a politician because, after his cabinet post, he served as chairman of Texas Instruments 1974-90, and also as chairman of British Alcan Aluminium 1987-91. He is sufficiently industry-minded to have opposed, in January 1991, the government's loading extra sick-pay burdens on business.

In his 75th year, he is using his biting wit to help his party escape too many more botches. In 1989, before wholesale mine closure was widely anticipated, as a former parliamentary secretary for the ministry of power, he warned of the risk of irreparable damage from rushed and ill-considered electricity privatisation. In 1991, he resigned as treasurer of the London Zoo, after a long struggle to persuade the government to resume subsidies.

He again showed his finger-pointing rebelliousness last March with an amendment denying the right of those who had not occupied their leasehold flats for over three years to profit by buying their freeholds. This amendment, aimed mainly at wealthy foreigners, secured the backing of another 107 peers. For tactical reasons, the government was saved from that humiliation by the votes of Liberal Democrats and Labour.

Andrew Roth

EDWARD PEARCE

If the upper house is to be elected, then it matters exactly *when* you hold the elections

That vote in the Lords over the absurd rail privatisation may be historic. If shots of the Princess exercising finally bring the Denver boot into newspaper publishing as retribution for the invasive salacity of the Underpress, so their Lordships' forlorn hope in voting down, before submitting to, the Broken Network (Private Subsidy) bill, may also have sparked something.

Constitutional reform has kept up a low active buzz in recent years, helped by the rise of the PR argument, and urged on with his usual energy by Graham Allen stamping around in the seven-sleepers den of the PLP bothering everyone with arguments and ideas. (There will, incidentally, be a useful constitutional conference under the auspices of Liberty on 13 November at TUC Congress House.) But it's a long haul and Labour, despite being officially wedded to an elected upper house, still sounds terribly apathetic.

But the events of 4-5 November (apt I suppose) say one simple thing: the unelected House of Lords can make a judgment chiming with tested public opinion. The people think something silly, their Lordships agree, but a government, running third, can use its mandate to impose a bill almost universally excoriated. Single-chamber despotism demands reform. Constitutional Reform leaps into the frame.

Hold elections mid-term, and our new practice of government unpopularity will produce a wrecking chamber

We have come a long way from the casual observation of Clement Attlee that he was "a crypto-unicameralist". But Attlee spoke the confident language of a party, that, though out, expected soon to be in, the language of power-users at a time of two-party checks and balances. We are inclined to reform the constitution because it will not check assured one-party rule. Mrs Thatcher has been a great inadvertent friend of reform. Even so, a Labour government or a Lib-Lab combination is imaginable, and reform will shackle *its* impulses to click fingers and say "Do this"—quite right too, but just remember the fact.

The first difficulty is, of course, power. The Lords has had, since 1911, a single year's power of delay. That could be extended to three years, forcing contentious legislation against the wire of the next general election. Alternatively, a Lords rejection of major legislation could be programmed to spark off a referendum. In other words, the upper house would work with the ordinary voter.

Unfortunately, an elected chamber will be more heavily geared to the party machines. Membership will be preponderantly from the parties, and in an upper house vested with real powers, will be better whipped. Can you see an accredited Conservative like John Peyton, sponsoring a major anti-Conservative amendment? And the machines will do everything in their power to make every upper house member a *Treuensmann*, a trusty.

So it matters *when* you hold elections for the upper house: if you do it in sync with the Commons, it will follow the general election, and Dunce the Second will vote like Dunce the First. Hold elections mid-term and our new practice of furious government unpopularity will produce a wrecking chamber 80 per cent anti-government. Imagine such a chamber elected in, say, 1947.

A further point that will annoy the more narrow-minded reformers: there are men and women of real calibre in the Lords, mostly nominated, but who would only rarely be candidates in an election. The wisest contribution on Maastricht came from a Law Lord, Richard Wilberforce. The bishops, for all our grumbles, are usually humane and sensible; and how many scientists and academics, now very usefully on hand, would want to stand for a party in an election?

The Anglo-Saxons, who had healthy institutions, had something called Eoldormen (from which we took the municipal Aldermen). To sustain the Alan Bullock-Howard Florey tradition, non-party figures might have places, perhaps nominated by their institutions—representatives of the Royal Society, the churches, the Bar, the medical colleges and societies and, indeed, the trade unions. All might be elected, but collegiately by the membership of each group. It would be a touch clumsy, and the dread word "corporatist" will be invoked, but there is such a thing as elder wisdom, not to mention specialist knowledge, and they would come in by votes, not nomination.

There are problems all right, but it all makes work for reforming folk to do.

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Ian Aitken goes along with the adulatory obituaries in the press that greeted the recent death of Jo Grimond–up to a point

Marching to the sound of Tory gunfire

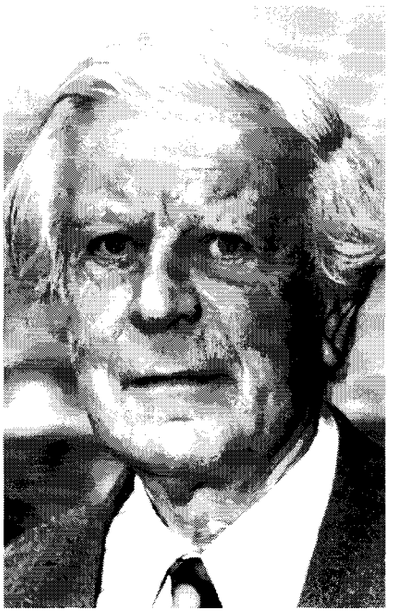
Not many leading politicians can look forward to a send-off as adulatory as that which Jo Grimond got from the obituarists when he died a couple of weeks ago at the age of 80. It wasn't just that they praised his wit, charm and intellect, which was only right and proper. Reading their assessments of his contribution to our postwar history, one could have been forgiven for concluding that we were saying goodbye to a political giant whose achievements were on a par with prime ministers, presidents and world potentates.

He was described by more than one writer as the best prime minister we never had. This is a somewhat subjective accolade, which is bestowed on quite a few formidable but ultimately unsuccessful politicians, including Denis Healey and sometimes even Tony Benn.

But in Grimond's case, the judgment amounts to a heavy thumbs down for the democratic process, since the voters were given at least three unqualified opportunities to make him prime minister—and refused to do so in their tens of millions. They were offered no such opportunity with Healey or Benn.

But the flights of journalistic fancy have gone even further. Reporting Lord Grimond's unpretentious burial service in Orkney, one writer became so carried away that he described the deceased as being as retiring and modest "in death as he had been in life". Though this inverted hyperbole can be forgiven in the emotional circumstances of a funeral, it must have brought a bleak smile to the faces of many of Jo's former colleagues. Unpretentious he may have been, but modest and retiring he most certainly wasn't.

Indeed, if he had been either or both of those things it is certain that he would never have been able to pull off the one significant achievement that no one can deny him—namely, his last-minute revival of the Liberal Party as it lay on its postwar deathbed in 1956. With its share of the vote down to a derisory 2.5 per cent, it was clearly on the point of disintegration until Jo Grimond shook it back to life and launched it on its celebrated "march towards the sound of gunfire".



Universal Pictorial Press

It was the survival of a third force that split the anti-Thatcher vote and guaranteed victory to the Tories in 1979

That last phrase was much quoted by the media, in the original tape-recording as well as in print, and is probably the most famous utterance Grimond ever made. But although it was taken with total seriousness by his immediate audience at the Liberal assembly, it is worth remembering that it was greeted by non-Liberals with much the same merriment that David Steel provoked with his equally celebrated injunction to "go back to your constituencies and prepare for government".

And knowing Jo, I suspect he, too, allowed himself an inward chuckle, even as he wowed them on the conference floor. Few people, inside or outside the Liberal Party, were more conscious of the crackpot pretensions of many of his party followers, or more prone to giggle at them in private. It was one of the most engaging of his many delightful personal qualities.

But although Grimond was undeniably a joyous exception to the enclosing greyness of the politicians who surrounded him at Westminster, it is hardly enough to justify a claim to immortality. What counts in this context is his contribution to the politics of our time. And the answer we are unanimously offered to that question is his extraordinary success in resuscitating the Liberal Party, and putting it back on the road as an effective third force.

It was without doubt an astonishing achievement, which was performed in defiance of what seemed at the time to be the irresistible forces of history and logic. Nor is there much doubt that he was the only leader who could have done it. In short, as the obituarists have unanimously declared, he was the right man for the times, so far as his party was concerned.

But it is the final clause of that sentence that encapsulates the real problem about Jo Grimond. It is true that, but for him, the once-great Liberal Party would at best have been reduced to the status of a student debating society, and at worst to utter oblivion. It was his achievement that the third voice continued to be heard within Britain's two-party system, and the groundwork was laid for the Gang of Four's attempt to "break the mould" of the Conservative/Labour monopoly on power.

In passing, it is worth noting that Lord Grimond was not exactly wildly enthusiastic about the Gang of Four's insistence on forming their own party instead of joining up with the ready-made Liberal Party. Even so, it was Liberals who saw to it that the middle ground remained occupied until Roy Jenkins brought his Social Democratic reinforcements over the horizon and established the Alliance.

But the essential point about this rather grandiloquent version of history is that the Alliance actually failed, that the mould was very definitely not broken, and that third-force politics are in scarcely better plight now than they were when Jeremy Thorpe was running the Liberal Party as Jo Grimond's successor. Moreover, a very heavy price has been paid for this modest advance. For in the meantime, the most destructive right-wing government this country has suffered this century has been sustained in office through four general elections by the half-cock electoral "success" of Lord Grimond's inheritors.

It would be unjust to heap the blame for 14 years of Thatcherism on poor Jo Grimond—others bear the direct responsibility for that. They include the Tory wets who failed to stand up to Lady Thatcher, the Labour right-wingers who deserted their party to form the vote-splitting SDP, and the Labour left-wingers whose antics drive the right-wingers to defect. Nor should we forget those supreme anti-Thatcher whingers, the Scottish Nationalists, whose suicidal parliamentary votes precipitated the general election that brought her to power in 1979.

Compared with this degree of guilt, Jo Grimond's contribution may look remote. But it remains probable that none of it would have happened without his "achievement" in re-igniting the flame of Liberalism in 1956. The fact is that it was the survival of a third force that split the anti-Thatcher vote and guaranteed victory to the Conservatives in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992. He wasn't to know it, but the sad truth is that the world might have been a better place if Jo hadn't succeeded in putting the Liberal Party back on the road all those years ago.

Or to put it another way: Great leader. Pity about the party.

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LETTERS

The "Tamsa Six" are not among those victims of injustice whose causes roll readily off the liberal tongue. They should be.

The Hotel Tamsa, in Istanbul, was attacked last Tuesday by a mob shouting nationalist slogans and hurling missiles; eye-witnesses say police joined the attackers. Some people in the hotel foyer fought back, whereupon a large force of police surrounded the hotel and arrested everyone inside—some 300 people—although most had been in their rooms at the time. Most were held for 14 hours, then deported. Six people, however, were detained in jail. Hearings are scheduled for two weeks' time.

Anthony King, of Salford University, was among those arrested. At court the next day, he says a minibus in which prisoners were being transported was "attacked by a vengeful mob . . . As the police drove away, they did a U-turn in the road to ensure the waiting crowd an encore."

The Tamsa Six can expect little attention for one simple reason—they are football fans, who, tarred with the "all English fans are hooligans" brush, got caught up in last week's anti-English hysteria around Manchester United's game against Galatasaray. Anthony King writes that the Tamsa Six are innocent of any offence, including John "Scotty" Cunningham, "who organised the trip, had no part in the disorder and indeed physically prevented United fans from going out". King believes the reason for their detention is "political . . . [They] are pawns in Turkish state politics", victims of the need of that state to reassert its authority in the face of Kurdish insurgency at home and the neo-fascist assault on Turkish "gastarbeiter" overseas. "We must insist that the hanging and birching brigade on the one hand, who would leave these individuals to their 'deserved' fate, and complacent middle England on the other, which does not care about football fans because they are not their 'type', are stirred into action."

Steve Platt

Intrinsic ambiguity

John Cole ("A time to speak frankly", 5 November) does not appear to appreciate that it is my job, as shadow secretary of state for Northern Ireland, to defend and articulate Labour Party policy.

Labour Party policy since 1981 has been to seek Irish unity by consent. The Labour Party supported the government in the debate in parliament on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and positively endorsed proposals within article four of the Agreement to establish an agreed system of devolved government. In 1987, the national executive committee reiterated the commitment to unity by consent, and asserted that "no group or party should or will be allowed to exercise a veto on political development or on policies designed to win consent".

In 1989, the NEC and leader of the Labour Party issued the final report of the party's policy review. To build the consent necessary for unity, the Labour Party committed itself to "work with the political parties in Northern Ireland to establish a devolved power-sharing administration in Belfast". It was this last statement that Cole considered the "dynamite" part of my speech, despite the fact that it was a quote from an official document that is now four years old.

As to my attitude to articles two and three of the Irish constitution, I oppose their unilateral abandonment, just as I oppose the unilateral abandonment of the British sovereignty claim. I do so because the unilateral abandonment of either claim would further encourage the extremists in the community that perceived itself to have been abandoned by its nation state. Since this view has also been expressed by the Irish prime minister, it is absurd for Cole to claim that I am outflanking the Irish government in my attitude to Irish nationalism.

In his uncharacteristically malicious attempt to impugn my motives, Cole even seeks to hold me responsible for the ambiguity surrounding article one of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In fact, the Unionists were among the first to point to the relative ambiguity, namely that, while the two governments agreed on how the status of Northern Ireland could be changed, they did not define the status of Northern Ireland.

Kevin McNamara MP
Shadow secretary of state for Northern Ireland
House of Commons
London SW1

Never mind the democracy

I found your account of the lack of democratic accountability in the new European state to which Britain now belongs illuminating ("Jeux sans frontières: it's a lock-out", 5 November). The author, Tony Bunyan, leaves readers to draw their own conclusions, which in many cases will probably be of a Eurosceptic nature.

A different solution would be to inject more democracy into the European Union, as the "superstate" is now called. If I remember rightly, only one of the Labour candidates for the London seat in the European Parliament mentioned, in their election statement, the need to make European institutions more democratic; most candidates, including the sitting MEP who later won the nomination, appeared to believe that the main aim of a Labour MEP is to secure for Britain a higher share of European Community grants. Why worry about democracy, they seemed to be saying, if we can get the cash?

Luca Salice
London NW5

A shameful record

Graham Allen MP (Letters, 29 October) accuses A Sivanandan ("Race against time", 22 October) of immature point-scoring for "accusing Labour of capitulation to the Tories over the Asylum Act". He points to the work of Labour members of the committee fighting the bill line by line, and also to the Labour Party's "long and honourable record of opposition to race prejudice".

Allen confuses the work of half a dozen committed MPs with "Labour". He doubtless recalls that the first Asylum Bill was lost for lack of parliamentary time, "despite Labour's surprising willingness to help rush it into the statute books", in the words of an *NSS* editorial back in March 1992.

More importantly, while Labour committee members challenged the clauses "line by line", as Allen points out, the Labour leadership was all too ready to capitulate to the ideological framework of the bill: that something was necessary to stem the flow of "bogus asylum-seekers". Labour's opposition was to the method, not to that framework.

As for Labour's "long and honourable" record on race, Allen is perhaps too young to remember Labour's Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968, rushed through parliament in three days to halt the "flow" of displaced (Asian) UK and Colonies citizens from Kenya, by depriving them of the right to live in the country of their citizenship.

But he should not be too young to remember Labour's failure to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act, which divided citizens into "patrials" (white) and "non-patrials" (black), and stripped the latter of rights of entry; or Labour's failure to oppose the removal of appeal rights from thousands in the 1988 Immigration Act, which doubled deportations in its first year of operation.

Returning to asylum, how hard did Labour fight against the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act of 1987, which removed for most refugees the possibility of getting out of their country of persecution to come to Britain? Has Labour taken a stand against the European agreements on immigration and asylum, which have led to refugees being shuttled from airport to airport around Europe?

Or against the agreement of December 1992, which tells refugees to apply to their own governments for protection? Or against the resolutions on expulsion and on family reunion of June 1993, which threaten to criminalise those who offer sanctuary to rejected asylum-seekers, and to reduce family reunion rights?

Can Allen honestly claim for his party a sustained, principled, committed opposition to policies and practices that shame Britain and bow to popular racism?

Sujata Aurora
Campaign Against Racism and Fascism Collective
London WC1

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For the unenlightened

Apart from the pettiness of her criticism about the positioning and size of the lettering on the cover of Ben Elton's *This Other Eden* ("Gas guzzler", 29 October), Vicky Hutchings' criticism in her review of the book is just too much of a put-down by half.

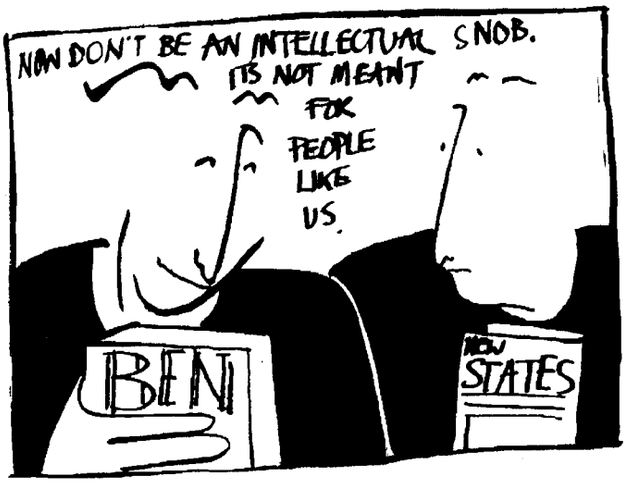
Sure, those of us who read *NSS* are going to find the obvious plotline and willy jokes less than intellectually stimulating. Maybe Ben Elton's book isn't actually meant for us, but for the more unsophisticated who might get some enlightenment from a startling parody of where consumerism is leading.

Accessibility isn't all, but bringing the public in to some, at least reasonable, political satire is worth the horror of an author cashing in on celebrity status by—speak it gently, now—having his name in bigger type than the title on the cover. The fact is, that discussion about the basic problems confronting us, which one might have expected to be the reason for reading a journal like *NSS*, is too much taken up by the arcane (post-modernism), or the mundane (machinations in the Labour Party).

Now I'm still reading it, and there's the good stuff as well. But a lot of people out there are going to think that the dry bits—not to mention the frequently pessimistic acceptance of the status quo—are just, to borrow Vicky Hutchings' adjective, tedious.

R Davis
London NW10

Min Cooper



A problem in the system

Sarah Baxter ("A boys' own story", 29 October) presents an excellent discussion on the problems of first-past-the-post, especially when applied to multiple seats. If Labour used the single transferable vote system for its shadow cabinet elections, these problems would vanish, and there would be no place for women's quotas either. I believe this is the system the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform suggests for elections for local council positions, not so very different from the shadow cabinet.

To reach parliament, women need on average to be more single-minded, self-assured and ambitious than men. It is therefore not surprising if a higher proportion of the women MPs stand for shadow cabinet positions than do men.

Councillor Lucy Care
Littleover
Derby

Unnecessary slaughter

Following the letter from Sonni Smith (Letters, 15 October), a resident of the Faroe Islands, it seems appropriate to respond to the accusations, aimed at the Pilot Whale Campaign and, in particular, Paul McCartney. The Pilot Whale Campaign, organised by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), is campaigning to stop the unnecessary slaughter of thousands of pilot whales and

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other small whales, dolphins and porpoises in the Faroe Islands.

The Islanders herd groups of pilot whales for up to 30 km into bays, using motorised boats, echo-location and sonar. The whales, including pregnant and lactating females and their young, are restrained using heavy metal hooks, and killed by cutting with a small knife, just below the blow-hole to sever the main arteries and spinal cord. Some whales, thrashing in distress and pain, snap their own spinal cords as they wait to die.

In 1992, the Faroes killed 1,572 pilot whales in 14 separate hunts, as well as Atlantic white-sided dolphins and white-beaked dolphins. The kills are indiscriminate and have been condemned by the British government, the European Parliament and the International Whaling Commission as inhumane. Hundreds of people may turn out to see a kill in the Faroe Islands. A Faroese government official described pilot whaling as a "sport", and the Faroese have been trying to deny this ever since.

The EIA, WDCS and WSPA are not "fanatical" organisations. Both the EIA and WDCS had official representatives on the UK government's delegation to the 1992 International Whaling Commission conference in Japan. Until a few years ago, a useful dialogue was conducted between the campaign groups and the Faroese authorities, yet the Faroese government has since refused to discuss the issue. After international condemnation in 1986, the Faroese introduced cosmetic regulations to control the hunts. These are poorly enforced and, despite repeated requests, the Faroese have failed to provide any evidence that they are capable of conducting a well-regulated and controlled kill.

The Faroese pilot whale kills are important because they are the largest direct whale kills in the world. The Islanders continue to ignore international welfare standards for animals, or to make any serious attempt to modify their behaviour. In other European countries these kills would have been outlawed, yet the Faroese believe that they have a right to continue a practice that has long since been abandoned by other isolated communities such as the Orkneys and Shetland Islands.

The Faroese have learned that the international community will not accept an outdated tradition that takes no account of the welfare of animals. The Faroe Islands are 1.8 billion Danish kroner in debt following the collapse of their fishing industry, and their best chance of future survival may depend on them joining the European Community. It is now time for the Faroese to stop pilot whaling and to take their place in Europe before it is too late—for the islanders and the whales.

Gillian Stacey
Pilot Whale Campaign
Environmental Investigation Agency
London EC1

THIS ENGLAND

$5 for all entries printed below. Entries on a POSTCARD please

•Thomas Crampton, aged 26, sued Paul Hassan, 18, in Bradford county court after an antique gnome was taken from his garden. It was tracked down to a nearby garden. Police took no further action.

"People will think twice before they steal garden gnomes now," Mr Crampton said, after Judge Edward Hamilton ordered Mr Hassan, a welder, to pay £298.49 compensation. —*Guardian* (Francis Harvey)

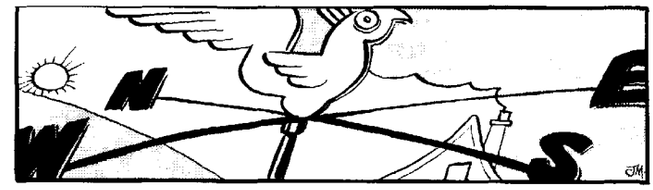
Credit where it's due

Funny that Edgar Sutton (Letters, 5 November) believes that "there was a time, in the 1960s, when the campaign for [homosexual law] reform was run from [the *New Statesman*'s] offices". I'd imagined that I was running it from 32 Shaftesbury Avenue, where the Homosexual Law Reform Society was based from 1958 throughout the campaign.

It's true that your veteran (and still active) legal and social affairs commentator, C H Rolph, was our very supportive chairman during the height of the battle; and that several *NS* contributors played a significant part—but I hope we can be clear about the historical facts.

Antony Grey
Secretary, Homosexual Law Reform Society 1962-1970
London NW2

FRINGE BENEFITS



Hanif Kureishi's homage to art schools hits the right note with **Colin Ward**

While we're all weeping with laughter over the serialisation of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, it's useful to recall the sign that Bertolt Brecht liked to lower in front of the audience at a particularly touching moment, saying: "Wipe away those self-indulgent tears." Hanif Kureishi is very sharp indeed and, like most comic writers, is deeply serious.

He's an *insider-outsider* (the term that Tony Gould coined to describe Colin MacInnes) able to see social facts about the way we live more accurately than the social statisticians. The observation that stays in my mind was a remark Kureishi made two years ago. He said that the biggest contribution to British culture in the postwar decades came from the art schools.

And he added that kids like him would be truants from his south London comprehensive, simply in order to blend into the atmosphere of the art school. He had noticed that the students actually enrolled there would stay until midnight. To me, this is a rare example of any teaching institution actually fulfilling its purpose.

We have very short educational memories, so I need to explain that before the reformers moved in, every town had its art school with a starting age of 11 or 13. The children who were seen as oddballs in primary schools through being clever but not exam material were often piloted in their direction. It was felt that some kind of aesthetically based curriculum might suit them best.

I was talking the other day to Sajjad Afzal, who at ten and a half was the second-best artist in his primary school in Small Heath, Birmingham, and yearned to move on to the art school, but was steered into a more academic secondary education, and has spent the rest of his life gathering up the experience of manipulating materials he might have picked up there. And in the 1970s I got to know Ernest Goodman, the then head of Manchester High School of Art, who, with the support of great names, was always a match for the city's efforts to close it down as an embarrassing anachronism.

The process known as academic drift hit the art schools hard. In search of status, just like the technical colleges, they squeezed out the secondary education side, so that the schools became colleges, starting at 16-plus. The next stage was a government committee, which produced the Coldstream-Summerson reforms (named after two worthy guys who should have known better), and insisted on the appropriate exam-passing entry-qualifications, and on "academic rigour".

So the odd but creative kids were frozen out, and the schools became departments of polytechnics. And now the polytechnics have been renamed as universities. This is a subtle way of buying off the staff who know that their numbers are being cut and their classes increased; so that everything that Kureishi reveres about an art-based education has disappeared.

Art, like language, is one of the few areas in which a schoolchild's perceptions and responses used to be treated with respect. That is why these subjects don't fit governmental ideas about testing their absorption of measurable facts and received opinions. Yet the huge irony is that, even if we value any kind of education by the currency-earning potential of their students, the art schools that Kureishi remembers earned, for our balance of payments, more millions from performing artists who despised the official values, than the output of thoroughly certificated industrial designers could possibly bring in.

Not only that, the arts in general are a far bigger earner than, for example, the motor-industry, which was once the criteria for value-for-money in the public-financed education system. The endless efforts to codify and classify the educational experience has ensured that the official system no longer has a place for the kids who might have found a haven in the cosy old art school.

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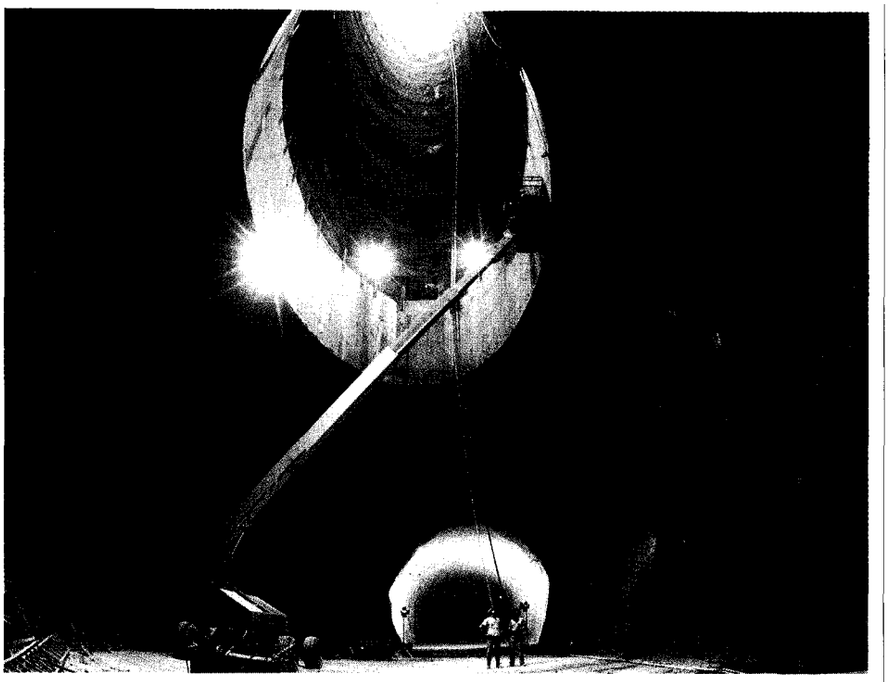

The death of the US Superconducting Super Collider is no occasion for mourning, argues **Felicity Mellor**. Big is no longer politically acceptable

The bigger they come

In particle physics, big, it seems, is not only beautiful but mandatory. Ever bigger machines have been constructed to smash matter into ever tinier and more fleeting fragments in the search for the ultimate structures of nature. Now the end may be in sight for mega-budget big physics—the ultimate in using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. The curtain is coming down not, as Stephen Hawking once suggested, because a unified theory of everything is close, but because the demands of the next generation of particle accelerators have collided with the limits of the politically acceptable.

In the long run, that may be no bad thing, forcing science to progress by more ingenious, more elegant—as well as cheaper—techniques. Meanwhile, there are bound to be casualties.The first is the US Superconducting Super Collider (SSC), an $11-billion behemoth that was to be built in a massive tunnel, half the length of the entire London Underground system, under the plains of Texas. Last month, four years after construction started on what was to be the world's largest accelerator, the US Congress terminated the project.

The SSC would have used thousands of superconducting magnets to guide two beams of particles, with energies of up to a trillion volts, in opposite directions round an underground ring, 54 miles in circumference (pictured above). This would have produced millions of collisions each second and achieved energies 20 times more than any existing accelerator.

Ten miles of the tunnel had already been built and thousands of scientists and engineers had arrived at the site in Ellis County, Texas, where a whole town had been destroyed to make way for the facility. Some $2 billion has already been spent on the project, but a combination of the large budget deficit, a history of managerial problems and ever-growing costs, put the project under attack in the House of Representatives. For two years running, the House voted against the project, but both times it was overruled by a Congressional committee dominated by the Senate. This time there was no reprieve. The SSC will now go the way of its predecessor Isabelle, which was abandoned ten years ago.

Mega-projects are not new in science. As early as the 15th century, the astronomer prince, Ulegh Beg, was using a substantial proportion of his country's resources to build a great observatory in Samarkand. Today, however, big science projects are not one-offs, but increasingly dominate research budgets. In Britain, for instance, the newly formed Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council has been allocated 20 per cent of next year's total science budget.

In an often-used religious metaphor, accelerators are the cathedrals of science. Just as cathedrals were built with the dual functions of worship and status symbol, so particle accelerators are not simply scientific facilities. Through sheer size, engineering expertise and the promise of scientific discovery, they confer prestige and status on the nations that own them.

Naturally governments expect something in return for the money they spend on research. In particle physics, as in sport, prestige rather than wealth creation, is the reward. A new agenda is introduced, in addition to scientific research—an agenda that is judged by quite different criteria. The race to some predetermined objective, then, becomes all-important for those scientific projects in which a government has a large stake. But does this strong emphasis on competition affect the chances of doing good science? The Apollo missions to the moon, for instance, were driven by cold-war politics and America's desire to beat the Russians, rather than by scientific goals. The Americans won the race, but it was the lower-profile later missions that produced the scientific rewards. Fewer missions, carrying more scientists, instead of military men, or a programme of unmanned missions, would have achieved the same results for less cost.

In particle physics, accelerators are the means by which we travel the road to the subject's putative final destination, the theory of everything. However, each step along the road involves searching for particles that only exist at higher and higher energies. Such energies can be attained only by building bigger accelerators. For many, the logic of bigger and better facilities with which to verify present theories is ineluctable. Science cannot look back nostalgically to the days of Rutherford, splitting the atom with little more than string and sealing wax. "I imagine that many aviators are nostalgic for the days of open cockpits, but that is no way to cross the Atlantic," said Nobel prize winner Steven Weinberg, a leading proponent of the SSC.

So what was the SSC, the jumbo jet of accelerators, supposed to do? One main aim was to find evidence of that pimpernel of particle physics, the damned elusive Higgs boson. Named after the Edinburgh physicist, Peter Higgs, its existence is required by the current theory, the "standard model", which sees all matter as composed of two types of particles, leptons (like electrons) and baryons (like protons and neutrons). The forces between them are produced by exchanges of a third type of particle called a boson. Packets of light, photons, are bosons that have zero mass. Nuclear forces are produced by other types of massless bosons called gluons, together with two heavier particles, the W and Z bosons. Underlying these is the still heavier Higgs boson. The heavier the particle, the more energy needed to produce it.

Not that the SSC had the field to itself. When construction began on the SSC, Europe decided it would build the somewhat similar, though rather less powerful, Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN, the European par-

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ticle physics centre near Geneva. The race had begun. For both facilities, the Higgs was seen as the number one prize. Yet history may be against them. Only two accelerators have ever found the particles which they were designed to look for.

So how should success be judged in scientific terms? To find the Higgs particle would indeed be satisfying. The standard model would have survived another test, and everyone could congratulate themselves for being jolly clever. It might also be something of a dead end. Exciting science occurs not when what you thought would happen, happens; but when something unexpected happens.

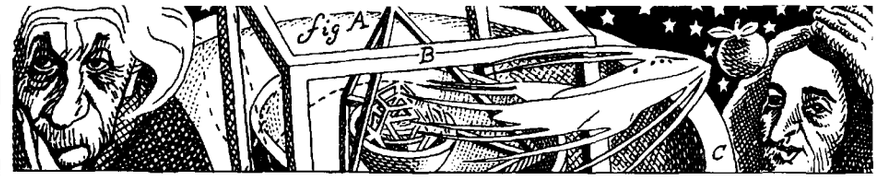
There is a maximum energy below which the Higgs particle must exist if the standard model is to be consistent. If the new accelerators reach this energy without ever finding the particle, or find other, unexpected, events, then the standard model must be abandoned. That is when the interesting science starts, because it throws up a whole host of questions for which to seek new answers. New theories are born. Yet although a null result might make for good science, it would hardly make for good publicity: billions of pounds of taxpayers' money spent hunting a particle that doesn't even exist! After a summer spent struggling to understand what Higgs particles are, the science minister, William Waldegrave, might not be too impressed if then told they don't actually exist.

The unpredictability inherent in scientific research is deeply at odds with the accountability required by funding committees. Committees want to be able to see that all the money they have allocated has produced results, and that the worth of these results can be easily communicated to the public. They do not want to fund a number of projects, many of which will ultimately prove to be wild-goose chases. Yet in the wasteful system of science, it is among this diversity of projects that new results are most likely to appear, and which provides the environment most adaptable to the investigation of unexpected phenomena. By contrast, the rigidity of the huge and costly ventures currently in fashion severely restricts the potential to follow up any unexpected findings.

This conflict in philosophies is most apparent where there is most to lose, where expenditure is high and public scrutiny intense—as is the case with the particle accelerators. As Freeman Dyson, professor of physics at Princeton, has said: "Gambling only becomes dangerous and destructive when the stakes are so high that you can't afford losing. This is a criterion for deciding the right size of a scientific project. The right size means a size at which you can afford to take a gamble. If you are too big to gamble, you are too big to do creative science." Under this criterion, the American legislature was correct to terminate the SSC. The question now is, should the Americans invest in the new European accelerator, or will that also be a project too big to fulfil its promises?

Felicity Mellor is a visiting research fellow at the University of Sussex

DIELECTRICS



Tea for two—or three or four or more? **Pat Coyne** says send in the clones

What is the most profound sentence ever written, a fellow student asks Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The answer comes from a zoology textbook—reproduction is the beginning of death. For Joyce, and even more so, one presumes, for the priggish Dedalus, this was zoology as metaphor. Each new generation extracts something, irretrievably, from the old. Or, *pace* Cole Porter, every time we say hello, we die a little.

Which brings us neatly on to clones. What if we could be our own offspring? This intriguing (not to say extremely attractive) possibility has been raised to the status of big news story recently with the announcement by the American doctors, Jerry Hall and Robert Stillman, of George Washington University, that they had managed to clone human embryos in a petri dish. In all, 17 original embryos had been transformed into 48.

Predictably, the news raised a storm of controversy, despite the fact that Hall and Stillman had announced their results in an impeccably scientific, low-key, fashion at a meeting of the American Fertility Society. Within a day of a *New York Times* front-page story entitled, "Scientist clones human embryos and creates an ethical challenge", they were under siege from reporters from all parts of the globe, eager to seize on this latest example of scientific *hubris*.

The US TV networks went wild. Hall and Stillman were the stars of programmes like *Good Morning America* and *Larry King Live*, fielding inquiries as to whether their techniques could be used to put a lion's head on a horse's body. Polls suggested that more than 60 per cent of Americans thought cloning was "against God's will". The ultimate accolade came last week, when both *Time* and *Newsweek* made the subject their cover stories, a case of cloning cloned.

So is this a case of fiction becoming fact? Have we arrived at Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, with its creation of grades of humanity from alpha to epsilon by "bokanovskification"? Is Ira Levin's *The Boys from Brazil*, where Josef Mengele attempts to recreate Hitler by cloning from a lock of his hair, turning into reality? Is a real Jurassic Park even now being planned?

Not quite. In fact, Hall and Stillman did little more than what has been done for well over a decade. The only difference is that they used human cells instead of those of other animals. In essence, they duplicated the process by which nature produces identical twins. A normal fertilised egg divides within hours to form two cells, then four, eight and so on. Occasionally, that first division produces a complete split into two separate, single cells, which then go on dividing in the normal way to produce two genetically identical individuals.

Hall and Stillman took eggs that were going to be used for *in vitro* fertilisation, but had become fertilised by two or more sperm and would not have been viable. They allowed one cell division and then removed the embryo's outer coating, the *Zona pellucida*, with an enzyme and physically separated the cells. An artificial *Zona pellucida*, made from sodium alginate, a gel-like substance derived from seaweed and used in, among other things, ice-cream, was then put around each separated cell to allow development to continue. The cells in the newly created embryos continued to divide, although they died after about six days, largely because the double fertilisation had made them abnormal.

So is the fuss justified? Does the experiment break new scientific ground or raise new ethical dilemmas? I don't think so. Cloning of domestic animals has been going on since 1979, so that, for example, five or six cloned calves can now be produced from each fertilised egg of a prize cow. Cloning of higher animals, bird and mammals (including humans) is impossible after a very few cell divisions, because the cells begin to specialise, into eyes, bone, blood and so on. Levin's notion of cloning Hitler's hair would produce only the world's most evil toupee. In theory it ought to be possible to clone whole animals from a single cell of any sort, but we are a long, long way from that. Hall and Stillman's work does not bring the day nearer.

As for new ethical problems, *in vitro* fertilisation has been with us since 1978, with the birth of Louise Brown, the first test-tube baby. The technique routinely involves taking a number of eggs from each woman, fertilising them, implanting a small number and freezing the rest in case the woman wishes to have another child. These are (non-identical) twins born at different times. There are over 10,000 frozen embryos floating around in liquid nitrogen in the US alone, waiting for parents to rescue them from limbo. A market in high-grade sperm now exists. All Hall and Stillman were doing is making it possible for those precious eggs to go a little bit further, raising the possibility of more identical twins, triplets or quads around to confuse us. What's the problem?

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The old story: Belfast Loyalist mural (Stephen Wilson/Select)

The Belfast Festival gives Northern Ireland's people a break from ethnic culture. **Philip MacCann** wishes that the secular holiday could become permanent

Escape from the ghetto

Oklahoma opened in Belfast the day after the Shankhill Road bomb. In one scene, Jud pointed his pistol to the rafters and fired. The whole audience jumped together.

Over the following week, events throughout the province were cancelled. The imminent Belfast Festival seemed almost impertinent. It was impossible to believe the publicity: that normal life flourishes in the province. Fears and funerals shifted through the city. It was suddenly vacant at evening again, just as in the 1970s. Business fell off. People kept to their homes.

Yet Belfast was, until now, at its best in autumn, when the biggest UK arts festival after Edinburgh runs. It is normally then that we can most easily suspend disbelief in the myth that Belfast is "buzzing" (never "booming"). We can walk through the fashionable area empurpled by evening, past cafés still open near Queen's University where the festival is housed. Footpaths are thickly jaspered and lamplit. Elmwood Hall is spotlit. The Potemkin village looks agreeable.

What you see in Northern Ireland are the results of a *dirigiste* policy—but from a Tory government promoting a free market. However, the more the government pays for the facade of prosperity, pretends to bridge differences with financed festivals, sponsors development, the more the terrorists remind us that chaos is just under the surface. Theirs is a mocking realism: what goes up must come down.

Faced with what has always seemed like an insoluble problem, disillusioned with local politics, most people in Northern Ireland can only try to put reality to the back of their minds and enjoy the impression of prosperity and cultural health. For most, the festival provides escapism.

While local plays dealing with the political situation in the province are written to satisfy a small audience, a larger, mostly middle-class one looks forward to the imported secular art: popular theatre, opera, music and comedy acts from Britain and abroad, which are harder to afford each year.

Most customers shun cheaper, self-obsessed productions and want to hear nothing of the politics of conflict. They will not select peformances that aim to raise consciouness. Theirs is constantly heightened.

Because, alongside the secular, liberal tradition of arts festivals run other (some say respected) traditions of civil war, sectarianism and terrorism gradually became harder to ignore after the renewed IRA bombing campaign in 1988. This year, celebrating the pretence was to prove more difficult than ever as the festival's main and proudest venue, the Grand Opera House, was bombed out of use last May. This year, there's nothing spectacular; it's hard to remember a festival so drab.

Now, with a new unpredictability to attacks and a resurgence of tit-for-tat murders, we have never buzzed more anxiously. It makes you think of the queasy swinging of Hong Kong today or 1930s Shanghai. Armoured cars roar past the university; soldiers patrol the festival area again, their jungle camouflage incongruous in the city.

In consequence, the "Belfast is Buzzing" campaign has been quietly dropped along with its chilling slogan: "Enjoy it while we can". The truth is, that's just what we did. Now we are all too aware that we could be blown up in our seats. The laughter of audiences is nervous. After a show, we hurry home. There's a reluctance to try out Belfast's new glass-fronted MGM multiplex cinema. "That place is a sinch," people say.

But you can hear a new argument in cafés and bars, on the lips of students, intellectuals on the dole, and passionate moderates all too aware that the government's Northern Ireland policy hasn't worked. Britain, they are saying, can try to pay for the lives people want to lead here only because it hasn't created the conditions for economic growth. Festivals are fine, but the culture, like the economy, can only thrive on the basis of stable politics.

True, had Northern Ireland been allowed to remain a real part of the UK, 73 years ago, war would have been unlikely. Created to be temporary, it still exists after all these turbulent years with a system of politics entirely devoted to ethnic issues. That obliterates voting on social policy, implicates every citizen from birth in political struggle and fuels militant extremes.

You can see how the nourishing of ethnic identity in ostensibly identical peoples has,

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over time, emphasised their cultural differences and prised them away from the more unified position of the past. Most Northern Irish people still share in British culture, but this leaves the distinct local culture free for extremists to divide. Since the troubles, Catholics have developed a zeal for the Irish language, Irish music and dancing, the *feis*. Most local theatre and literature is nationalist. The Festival reflects this. Parades and the Orange Order have been a more common expression of loyalist emotion of late than Protestant poetry or the Presbyterian theology and radical politics of the past.

Today, the province feels more provincial. Local art is mostly of the community and stultified by political conviction. What isn't is obsessed to find a Northern Irish identity, or to bridge the divide. It's difficult for a local company to put on a show in Belfast without a local message; classics are "Ulsterised".

Our conflict is an issue that eclipses all others. In this environment, a culture can't flourish; it reflects the ingrown way of life. Under an ethnic system, all elements of life are politicised: school, faith, address, social life, in the most neurotic areas, even the colour of your clothes—a red-and-blue sweater would be inappropriate for Divis Street.

Although the Belfast Festival provides people with the opportunity to taste a healthy culture with its imports of secular art, another festival—the biggest event in Northern Ireland—dwarfs it: the sectarian, loyalist parade on 12 July. Try as you might, you can't succeed in ignoring the social disease that has grown from ethnic politics.

Many are saying that the government, rather than building on similarity, encourages conflict by emphasising ethnic difference. Fair-employment policy labels all citizens Catholic or Protestant; the Anglo-Irish Agreement enshrines these communities, and power-sharing ensures that their politics remain sectarian. But instead of erecting the appearance of a democratic society upon division, should the basis for good government not be created instead? Recent talk of peace has been put in perspective again by the reality of party antagonism. Is there an alternative?

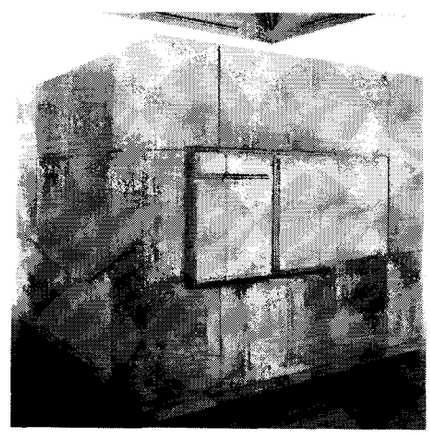
Late at night in the genial, liberal atmosphere of the Festival Club, tongues begin to loosen: the economy and culture will thrive only if conflict ends. This tiny, privileged clientèle—the constituency of South Belfast—is keen to enjoy prosperity and secular culture. Listen, and you can tell how they resemble the moderate majority of Northern Irish people. If they had a democratic option, they need not support extreme minorities that represent their ethnic group. Listen harder, and you can follow their most recent argument. Normal socio-economic politics would allow all to participate in government; ethnic groups could then integrate . . .

Among all the disagreements, those walking home past the floodlit buildings and bright bars of Belfast's festival area in a November dusk feel one certainty. Like scenery, it could all come down overnight.

The Belfast Festival runs until 27 November

Could the Turner Prize judges have got it right? **Sue Hubbard** reports

The colour of memory



The ghost trio: Vong Phaophanit, "Neon Rice Field"; Hannah Collins, "Breath"; Rachel Whiteread, "Untitled"

The smell of autumn hangs over London. The air is thick with the smoke of bonfires and the traditional scent of bile, as it seeps from art critics such as Brian Sewell towards the annual Turner Prize. The prize's imperfections have already been argued. It should be allotted to one outstanding artist, regardless of age (the upper limit now is 50), and there should be another shortlist to encourage the up and coming. Certainly, as I wrote last year, the 1992 Turner Prize represented the nadir of pretension. Unfocused, market-led and jargon-propelled, it was quite simply depressing.

Yet this year I detect a sea-change. There is a new cohesion. The show is balanced, thoughtful, organic. Painting, photography, sculpture and installation are all represented, and each artist speaks with eloquence in his or her chosen medium.

Change, loss and memory are some of the base notes. Each artist appears to be struggling, within the confines of a different visual language, to pull together disintegration and integration, the spiritual and the material.

Prominent in recent weeks for her East End house embalmed in plaster, Rachel Whiteread is one of the most thoughtful young sculptors around. Her early work consisted of casting the negative space under tables and inside cupboards. It left a great impression. For here was an artist who understood the poetic use of metaphor: the ability of an object to act, like Proust's madeleine, to trigger buried memories such as those childhood experiences of making camps under a table, or of hiding in a cupboard and all its accompanying melancholy.

Later, she cast other domestic objects. The inside of a bath became a sarcophagus, the shell of a deserted 1930s terraced house in north London (assembled with the positive side on the outside, like a mirror image of itself) a silent, haunting tomb enshrining traces of the lost lives that had passed through it. Her work is about death, about attempting to define and encapsulate the past—as in her "room" in the Tate, and the house in the East End, which stands monumental and poignant like a great white mausoleum for the collective memory of a dying way of life.

Vong Phaophanit also makes sculpture of a sort. He draws on the traditions of the Russian avant-garde, Dada and Surrealism, and the more recent Italian Arte Povera movement to make installations from non-art materials. Like Whiteread, he is concerned with memory and with displacement.

His language is cross-cultural. Born in Laos, educated in France and living in Britain, he employs the tensions between the first and third worlds. His materials are loaded with cultural and historical significance: food mountains, famine, colonisation. An installation does not provide a fixed meaning but rather a point of departure, to create possibilities for thought.

In *Neon Rice Field*, corrugated mounds of rice have been piled over red neon strips like a huge ploughed field or the waves of sand left by a receding tide. Light is important. The

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rice glows translucent, the shadows cast are those of hills, of landscape. And there is the smell: food and art, the stuff of life.

Hannah Collins' work also concerns memory. Her grainy black-and-white photographs carry the poignancy of old newsreel or newsprint. Inherent in photography is the embalming of a real moment and its transformation into an object. This is exemplified by two photographs taken from a larger work, *Signs of Life*, made for the Third International Istanbul Biennial.

A deserted, run-down street in Istanbul (though it might be anywhere) speaks of urban decay, deprivation and war, just as the curious sight of a redundant Russian army rubber boat—the apparent object of barter in a street market—reminds us of the flux of political orders and their cost to individual lives. Collins also draws on the genres of traditional art: the still life and the nude figure. In *Breath*, a visceral image of snails devouring oysters—the cycle of life and death, food and sex—is employed with the classicism of a Dutch master. *Truth* (a stunning female nude with luxuriant hair) explores, through references to Mary Magdalen and Rapunzel, the myth of voracious female sexuality.

Sean Scully is the only painter on the shortlist. A dedicated abstractionist, he remains a lyrical and Romantic artist. His influences come in a direct line from Turner via American Abstract Expressionism and Mondrian—from whom he borrows his structure of grids. Like his precursors, Scully is "interested in an art that addresses itself to our highest aspirations".

For him, abstraction is "a non-denominational religious art . . . the spiritual art of our time". Using the stripe, " a neutral form", Scully imbues it with meaning. It becomes the architectural building-block, both of his separate, abutted canvases and of the dominant emotional mood within a painting.

He paints layer upon layer with an Italian painters' brush, mixing pure pigment. His tones are those of the *quattrocento*: umber, sienna, earth colours. Yet each colour is never what it seems. Black is a luminous combination of greens and reds, a rich cream is pulled over a lower layer of crimson, which breaks through the surface like a ghostly memory of the painting's past. Muscular, yet delicate and alluring, these paintings examine the conflict between integration (the whole) and disintegration (the fragment).

Except, of course, to the individual artist, I don't think it matters much who wins. What does seem important is that these four artists demonstrate that contemporary art does not have to be empty and self-seeking: that much of it still has the ability to transcend and transform, to reach beyond itself and provide us with new ways of seeing.

The Turner Prize exhibition is at the Tate Gallery to 28 November; Rachel Whiteread's "House" is at the junction of Roman Road and Grove Road, London E3, to the end of the month. The prize is awarded, live on Channel 4, on Tuesday 23 November

Cheapskate auteur makes shattering breakthrough: "Another Girl, Another Planet"

Jonathan Romney on the low-tech toy that lets novices direct films

Honey, I shrunk the kit

In the 1950s, the French director and critic Alexandre Astruc sounded a rallying call for what would later become the New Wave, when he called for a style of film-making that would be as immediate as writing. Astruc's famous formulation was the *caméra-stylo*, the camera-pen. Over the past few years, film-makers in the US have discovered a rougher and readier version of that formula—Pixelvision, or what you might call the *caméra-Biro*.

In 1987, the Fisher Price toy company introduced the PXL-2000, a low-budget and lower-tech camcorder selling for under $1,000 and aimed at the 10- to 16-year-old market. Unfortunately for Fisher Price, the move was as ill-judged as Hoover's tickets-to-New York offer. The camera was so unreliable that the company had to set up a special freephone service to answer complaints. It wore out appreciably with every use, and the line was discontinued after one season.

What the market loses, the avant-garde picks up—thus it ever was. Apart from being cheap and cheerful, the PXL has a number of other qualities to recommend it to the artistically curious. A fixed lens gives it unusual focus—from extreme close-up to infinity—although the actual make-up of the image, composed of unwieldly, chunky pixels, produces an effect not unlike the electronic blurring of anonymous witnesses on TV documentaries. And a thick black border gives the images the sort of inexorable distancing that will lure any adept of postmodern irony. From this altogether unmanageable base material, a new aesthetic was born.

What kind of aesthetic it is can be judged from two programmes at the London Film Festival (on 18 and 20 November). They will later become a nationwide touring package (it comes to the ICA in January).

The most elaborate piece of work is a 56-minute feature by Michael Almereyda, *Another Girl, Another Planet*. But perhaps the star attraction is an item in the other package, *It Wasn't Love* by Sadie Benning. Benning, who started working with Pixelvision at 16, and became the youngest artist ever to be featured in the Whitney Biennale, rapidly became a cult heroine. This was partly for her vigorous espousal of the form, partly for the aggressive existential sex-pol of the way she expressed her emerging lesbian identity.

Benning's work has been compared to the neo-punk Riot Grrrl movement, and the DIY fanzine aesthetic is writ large in *It Wasn't Love*. The camera itself isn't the only pen in this fragmented road movie without a road. Benning scrawls titles and slogans on her body, leers defiantly with a girlfriend into the lens, and montages a selection of *non-sequitur* images and sounds into a parodic narrative of *amour fou*.

Sometimes the rebel pose hits home, sometimes it's too oblique to do other than baffle or stir up parallels with Kenneth Anger. It's like flicking through a selection of Sonic Youth album covers in quick succession. But Benning's borrowings often reveal an outrageously malevolent wit—as when she takes Mervyn Le Roy's 1956 child-monster movie, *The Bad Seed*, and gives it a teen-dyke twist. Benning uses the technology for sampling, not from a theoretical angle but to charge it with the adolescent thrill of shoplifting.

Pixelvision practitioners and theorists alike—you'd be surprised how many there are already—have commented on the infantilism inherent in the form (reminiscent of the early Buzzcocks and their Woolworth's guitars). Benning brings this out better than anyone, although she's not the machine's youngest *auteur*. That honour belongs to eight-year-old documentarist Sierra Le Baron Mellinger, director of *The Doctors* (1988), a visit to Mom's gynaecologist. Sierra, Macaulay Culkin is waiting for your call.

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Pixelvision is also a great vehicle for wise-acre buffoonery, judging by Joe Gibbons' flip, aggressive *Elegy*. One man (Gibbons?) rants at his dog Woody as the two roam, in an almost abstract blur, through a graveyard in autumn. All of life and death is there in the monologue, but Woody, his panting captured and amplified by condenser microphone, is gloriously indifferent. Overlaid with the *vérité* sound of crunching leaves and punctuated by the explosive slashes of electronic interference that are the by-product of Pixelvision's wind-back edits, *Elegy* shows the medium's aptness for work so physically immediate, it's almost neat performance.

Beside these guerrilla tactics, *Another Girl, Another Planet* seems disappointingly conventional. Almereyda already has an interesting CV, including an original script for Wenders' disastrous techno-ramble *Until the End of the World* and a barely watchable but engaging family fantasia called *Twister*. He took to Pixelvision because it was the cheapest way he could get a feature made.

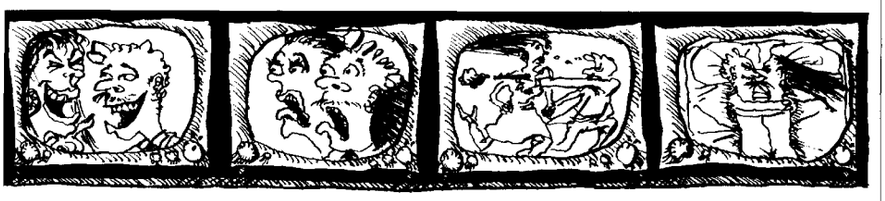
The strange textures apart, *Another Girl* feels like a conventional independent feature *manqué*, with its not terribly interesting narrative about a young man and his glamorous bohemian loves (including Elina Lowenstein from Hal Hartley's *Simple Men*). What the film does have going for it, to spice up its East Village slacker languor, is a claustrophobic feel derived partly from the black border and partly from Almereyda's decision to shoot in his own and a friend's apartments.

In addition, there's the strange feeling that all images are reduced to the same material textures, whether they're "real" or televisual. Not only faces dissolve into near abstraction (intriguingly decomposing the notion of "character"), but so do images already made of light. Almereyda explodes his reality effect by scanning at febrile pace over a pinball machine, and by hacking in repeated chunks of an engaging 1930s Max Fleischer cartoon, *Dancing on the Moon*.

It's an unfortunate side-effect of Almereyda's film that it gets you wondering what a "proper" film of his might be like. Indeed, purists might sniff at his over-eagerness to cover his low-tech tracks with smooth edits and dissolves. Even though the film was shot in one week, it still cost $12,000, including the transfer to 16mm. Almereyda may not in any case get to use Pixelvision much longer. Both machines and tapes have a high disintegration factor, and Pixelvision fans have reputedly scoured every last Toys-R-Us in the hope of snapping up remaining models.

This dinky little revolution may, in any case, have had its moment. Apart from the fact that Sony is now said to be upgrading the technology, rough-hewn Pixelvision's special appeal as a polemical tool rather overshadows the fact that it's kind of horrible to look at. The wave of Pixelvisionaries must surely be as historically specific as the felt-tip fanzines of punk. And I bet none of them would say no to an offer of a nice shiny Steadicam from Mr Coppola. Then again, if anyone happens to have a working model to hand, I'll happily swap you for my last year's Gameboy.

JACI STEPHEN



Forget Princess Di in the gym; high-minded producers commit worse invasions of privacy every night on TV

There is a debate in Milan Kundera's novel *Immortality* about the role of the camera in life. "The more indifferent people are to politics, to the interests of others, the more obsessed they become with their own faces," says the character Paul. He refers to the process as "the individualism of our time".

"Individualism? What does it have to do with individualism, when a camera takes you in a moment of agony?" asks Agnes. "On the contrary, it means that an individual no longer belongs to himself but becomes the property of others." She goes on to talk about her childhood, and how adults used to ask if they could take her picture. "And then one day they stopped asking. The right of the camera was elevated above all other rights."

The Princess of Wales would probably agree, though it can easily be argued that a subject who elevates the camera above all else in her own life deserves everything she gets. The outrage that greeted the photos of the Princess working out comes from the usual sources—largely other newspaper editors, considerably cheesed off that they missed the scoop, and affecting false piety as a means of saving face.

As is always the case, television was quick to take up the cudgel against the press on the old issue of "invasion of privacy". Television producers employ this tactic all the time, but get away with it on the grounds of their subjects' "consent" and under the banner of "fly-on-the-wall" television, or, as Steve Beard called it in this magazine a month ago, "reality TV".

Fly-on-the-wall television, however, is not what it used to be. Today, "fly-plus-the-family-of-nine-irritatingly-buzzing-around-every-room-in-your-house" would be a more accurate description. In the old days, a camera would point at the subject in a genuine attempt to represent what it saw. Now, the subjects are required to perform, to amuse, and keep the audience entertained.

Where once it was enough simply to be human to warrant the title "interesting", now it is the ability to act interesting that earns a place on television. Witness the bores and failures who manage to entertain sufficiently to get a *Blind Date*, and the subsequent disasters when they turn out to be unable to live up to their on-screen performances.

Paul Watson currently dominates the fly-on-the-wall field. He has already brought us the memorable *Sylvania Waters* this year (fly observes rich Australian household). On Sunday evenings, there's *Theatre School* on BBC2 (fly observes drama students; Watson is the series editor), and he is now filming in Sarajevo (fly observes anyone it can). On Fridays on BBC2 is *The Living Soap* (fly observes students living in household). Anyone seen the fly-swatter?

Television producers always try to refute accusations of voyeurism and exploitation by claiming that they serve a social function through revealing The Way We Live. They also say that participants take part of their own free will. Yet surely "invasion of privacy" must apply if, as is inevitably the case, a severe editing process takes place in which the subject has no say in how he or she will appear? Or if he or she is filmed in an emotionally charged situation that was not yet apparent when the camera started rolling?

The first programme of *Theatre School*, for example, ended with a young woman being told she could only have a grant for her second and third years (she is already well into her first). She started to shake and cry, and wiped away a profusion of tears when it was suggested she talk to her parents.

Her pain and vulnerability was almost too distressing (not to mention embarrassing) to watch and there is no doubt the camera was intruding on a moment of private despair. Would the student really have consented to being filmed, had she known the camera was to turn her, in Kundera's words, into "the property of others" through the filming of her "moment of agony".

On last Sunday's *Mediumwave* programme on Radio 4, Paul Watson talked about his work in Sarajevo, where he hopes "to represent their life as it is". A programme may, for example, feature a woman opening a distressing letter and, said Watson, perhaps have "the courage to show her crying for a minute". For "courage", read "invasion of privacy".

Far from being socially realistic, the kind of television that features "ordinary people" is manipulative and intrusive. It creates as false a version of reality as it's possible to get. That, by definition, is the nature of the camera. But worse, it is creating the kind of society where it has become socially acceptable to invade any "ordinary" person's privacy: on the streets, at our front door, in the workplace.

"Reality" TV is a licence to steal; our emotions and our lives are no longer our own. "People will tell their own story," said Watson of his Sarajevo programmes. Maybe. But it is the editor who decides the stories that are actually heard.

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One of the "Awakenings" series by the photographer Samena Rana. "Disrupted Borders", edited by Sunil Gupta (Rivers Oram Press, £14.95), is the published record of a project mounted by the Arts Council's new international visual arts body, INIVA. The beautifully designed book unites text and image in exploring the experience of "outsiders" in western culture

Thames barriers

LETTER FROM ULSTER AND THE HUGO POEMS
E A Markham
Littlewood Arc, £6.95
BRITISH SUBJECTS
Fred D'Aguiar
Bloodaxe, £5.95

Paula Burnett

The peculiarly British ambivalence about black cultural expression is well summed up by topical events. On the one hand, the South Bank Centre and the Arts Council are staging *Out of the Margins*, a celebration of British black and Asian writing. On the other, the government has announced that it is to close down the Commonwealth Institute by turning off the funding tap from 1996. With funds already reduced to little more than a trickle, the Foreign Office policy has starved all areas of the institute's work over the past decade. Yet that work has heroically continued to nurture the cultural climate in which such events as the South Bank festival can blossom.

So many of the black and Asian writers taking part have been fostered by the institute's encouragement. So many British citizens, both black and white, children and adults, have begun to appreciate a multicultural society through visits to the galleries and its special events. So many writers and students have been able to share the literature of the Commonwealth through the library, unique in this country. If all that goes, Britain will be the poorer, and the coming generations of writers may never materialise.

E A Markham and Fred D'Aguiar are examples of writers who are, at the moment, British. They engage creatively with their experience of living here, but the riches they offer are very much shaped by their identity as black citizens of the Commonwealth. We lose either the institute, or them, at our peril.

Markham is a reminder to any non-Caribbeans who may still believe that Derek Walcott is the only notable Caribbean poet that they are making a serious mistake. Stewart Brown and Ian McDonald's claim, in their recent anthology of the region's Anglophone poetry, that it is "one of the real growing points of contemporary writing", is not wide of the mark. Markham is one of a clutch of memorable poets enriching English literature with a distinctively Caribbean-rooted voice.

Although long based in Britain, his tenth collection reveals him as a Ulyssean traveller, trailing the world with his Caribbean roots securely stowed, and living by his (very Caribbean) wit. Growing from a time of teaching in Ulster, these poems engage with the enigmatic realities of modern experience as he deftly slips the private scale into the public world, taking on the political from surprising angles. There is much sheer pleasure in this volume, not least in its unstuffy humour. As one of the poems says, "It's a coarse time,/but we'll outwit it."

He is a carnivalesque masker assuming different personas. Some years ago, he ran three poetic personalities, publishing in different styles as Sally Goodman and Paul St Vincent, "creator" of the Creole-voiced "Lambchops". Here, Sally surfaces once more in the cheerful invocation "May Sally paint your door in bright colours" and the Creole voice is deployed with great brilliance.

But underscoring the jester's gaiety is a sharper sense of suffering. Writing about Ulster poses problems: "Scenes of local colour/won't do the trick—too much blood/ under the lamp-posts", but the figure of a man with blood on his hands recurs in different settings. With typically compact tough-mindedness, he admonishes: "Remember, the sky over cruelty/can be blue."

Born in Montserrat in 1939, Markham shared what Derek Walcott calls "a sound colonial education" and weaves artful new narratives around western cultural baggage, including the classics, Shakespeare and Margaret Atwood. Rushing for a train results in a spillage of symbolic contents from his bag, including a "white top", but it is very much as a black man that he wears it.

He expresses a solidarity with postcolonial experience worldwide, dancing with Desmond Tutu, taking on Native American voices, and penetrating the ambiguity of black athletic success: "the flags/held aloft by children fingering medals/have nothing left of our cloth." Markham is aware of what is lost as well as what can survive.

There is mischief in his apparent artlessness—"I'll write/at the weekend to thank you for Canada/(lovely present, unspoilt, where will I put it?)", he writes. The intimacy resonates ironically with the great imperial trade-offs (Canada was exchanged for Guadeloupe) that determined the language poets inherit. With tongue in cheek, he footnotes some of the more local and esoteric references (not this one), but it should not be forgotten that the notes are part of the fiction.

Above all, he has a dramatist's ear for speech, effortlessly creating voices for his imaginatively muscular ideas. Like dazzling acrobatics, his verse can leave the unathletic reader feeling earthbound; but, as with athletics, it is possible to enjoy the speed and grace without understanding every move.

He shifts registers silkily from Creole to Camden Town and, in the section responding to hurricane Hugo, ties both halves of the collection together by showing a 17th-century Montserratian ancestor to have been a Kevin from Ireland—who demonstrates his new Caribbean identity through language: "Tell she I love she."

There are coruscating moments, too, in Fred D'Aguiar's third collection of poems, *British Subjects*. The title signals a digging into British identity for a young writer born in Britain of Caribbean parentage, then raised in Guyana, and until recently resident in Britain. His earlier work was more firmly placed in Guyanese life and language, particularly the

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first book, *Mama Dot*. Now his Guyanese sense of a water-bound landscape is naturalised to the tidal reaches of the Thames. A night flight over London and "my neck of the woods" reveals "The Thames ribbed and corseted/by traffic despite its peregrinations/in a black wetsuit".

Later the river is "sanskrit in black ink/scribbling away into the dark". Building on his conjuring of Columbus as a Triton figure rising from the river in "1492", he now imagines that Bob Marley's locks break the plaited tide. The Thames Barrier becomes a grand metaphor of racial exclusion.

Guyana is now a place with museums to be visited like a tourist, although he is accompanied by his mentor—the novelist Wilson Harris—who expounds their shared history. D'Aguiar is of the next generation after Harris, but needs to guard against assuming an august mantle too easily. Some of the poems here do not earn their place. His editors at Bloodaxe should have been sterner, helping him to complete the shift from a promising narrative skill to a richer metaphoric texture while retaining his ear.

That said, there are some strikingly original poems here; particularly fables such as "A Gift of a Rose", in which relationships between the black community and the police are poignantly allegorised. D'Aguiar has begun to speak authoritively of a British experience, but he is now in the US. Britain risks losing him and other talents such as Caryl Phillips.

It was at the Commonwealth Institute that a remarkable epic poem, written in London by the Jamaican Jean Binta Breeze, recently had its first reading. A national commitment to such writers and the institute is vital if the English language—enriched for centuries by different cultures—is to continue to thrive.

Paula Burnett is editor of "The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse". "Out of the Margins" runs at the South Bank from 11-14 November

Phoney war

WHILE ENGLAND SLEEPS
David Leavitt
Viking, £14.99

Richard Canning

This book is a bad dream. Can it really have been crafted by David Leavitt, a writer who had so confidently unpicked the sensibilities of urbane New Yorkers, straight and gay? Leavitt's sure narrators in his stories and the novels *The Lost Language of Cranes* and *Equal Affections* pointed to a writer happy exploring a world close to him.

But Leavitt has left the US, literally and imaginatively. Now settled in Florence, he seems to have abandoned his fictional talents in some undefined never-never land—at least in *While England Sleeps*. The novel records the romance between aristocratic writer, Brian Botsford, and Edward Phelan, a self-educated artisan and Communist, in the 1930s. It is a love born on the unlikely transportive delights of the London Underground.

Tragically, Brian determines to leave his homosexual feelings behind, wrongly seeing the relationship as a dead end—as terminal and limiting as the recently opened Cockfosters station. He takes up with a girl produced by his "wealthy Aunt Constance"—a hammy attempt at a Wildean matriarch—forcing the distraught Edward to join the fight against Franco in Spain. He flees, disillusioned, and is imprisoned for desertion. Brian's intervention secures his release but it is too late; Edward soon succumbs to typhoid.

Even Brian's self-confessed unreliability can't prepare the reader for the fantastic backdrop that constitutes Leavitt's portrayal of 1930s Europe. Specifics are wrong. "Lord Eden" is responsible for British foreign policy. Brian describes an impossible train journey from Barcelona to Gibraltar that would have passed through Franco-held territory.

But the greater error is tonal. Brian's recounting is inconsistent. Supposedly written in the mid-1950s, his memoir slips between a hackneyed approximation of upper-class, inter-war languour and a contemporary vernacular of graphic sexual conquest that has spilled over from Leavitt's previous work. This leads to some unintentionally laughable moments. Our hero, finally penetrated, rhapsodically records feeling "this quadrant of pleasure hidden deep up inside" one minute; the next a desire to "utter words I'd never uttered . . . 'Fuck me', 'Come inside me'".

The oddest thing about the book is that it has mostly been drawn from real life. The skeleton of the plot is lifted from Stephen Spender's *World Within World*. Some incidents are transposed word for word; image for recorded image. Astonishingly, Leavitt failed to mention the debt in the book's acknowledgments, though—to his lawyers' annoyance—he later admitted having used Spender's autobiographical account as a "springboard". This being so, *While England Sleeps* amounts to the poorest of literary belly-flops. A bastardisation of Spender's sublime original, the book sinks.

Spender has objected to the theft of his life and work, while admitting he'd willingly have given it to a new Tolstoy. Whether or not Leavitt is legally culpable, he is artistically at fault in attempting to twist an authentic account of love, regret and a tortuous transition from homosexuality to married life. Whatever one thinks of Spender's book, it patently doesn't suit Leavitt's reworking of it as a gay-friendly parable for the 1990s.

It is ironic that, in moving away from the home environment he captured so well, Leavitt has forsaken the very material he might have used to reply to the sexual hesitancy in *World Within World*—albeit across a historical, geographical and cultural divide. The best that can be hoped of *While England Sleeps* is that its reception will wake Leavitt from this drift into unfamiliar waters, before he risks drowning his talent by overestimating his own capabilities.

Private lives

THE JAGUAR AND THE ANTEATER: PORNOGRAPHY DEGREE ZERO
Bernard Arcand
Verso, £17.95

Elizabeth Wilson

With wit, irony and scholarship, Bernard Arcand, a French Canadian anthropologist, exposes the multiple contradictions of pornography and the pornography debates. He describes how pornography is consumed and enjoyed by millions today; yet the discourse on the subject never condemns or justifies it as pleasure, but always in terms of other advantages or harms.

So pornography is good if it prevents potential offenders from committing sexual assaults, bad if it encourages them to act out fantasies; good if it has artistic merit (when it becomes "erotica"), bad if it has low production values and no aesthetic interest.

Arcand reviews the various attempts to measure the effects of pornography. He draws the perhaps unexpected but surely wise conclusion that part of what keeps the debate going is the way in which research has "proved" any and every conflicting hypothesis about pornography and its effects. Furthermore, he sets the growth in the pornography industry in the context of the growth of all forms of written and videoed material. If *Playboy* and *Penthouse* sell roughly five million copies a month, so also does *Good Housekeeping*, while *Family Circle* sells 8.3 million and *Reader's Digest* a staggering 17.7 million.

He pokes fun at the members of the American Meese Commission (whose remit and report started from a premise hostile to porn). They spent an inordinate amount of time consuming pornography during the hearings, and at least one member was later convicted of assaults on minors. At the same time, he lays out the feminist arguments against porn in an even-handed manner, although he points out that insistence on the difference between "women's" and "men's" reactions to the sexually-explicit breaks down on closer examination. Then, we we find a multitude of individual responses increasingly hard to group in any predictable way.

Having distanced himself and the reader from the immediacy of these debates, Arcand sets the development of pornography in a much-needed historical perspective. Pornography, as we understand the term, is not a transhistorical phenomenon, and the erotica of the ancient world had different meanings and purposes from ours.

From this, he proceeds to consider modernity and the relationship of pornography to the modern and contemporary growth of privacy, individualism and isolation. Here he draws the many contradictory elements of pornography together. He demonstrates that its insistence on "real" sex—actual ejaculation, endless close-ups of sexual organs—both

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panders to the public wish for the "truth" (naked and unadorned, so to speak) yet perpetuates new lies: that ejaculation can be endlessly repeated, erections eternally maintained, orgasms always achieved. He suggests, following Susan Sontag, that pornography is the pursuit of excess and that, in this respect, it is close to other forms of contemporary human activity, including, importantly, the way in which modern art and music have developed.

Finally—and surprisingly, given his tone of amusement and irony—Arcand reunites pornography with the sexual activity with which it is most usually associated: masturbation. He concludes by seeing this solitary act as a template of the increasing isolation and solipsistic privacy of modern life and, even more disturbingly, of the separation of sex from both procreation and death: in other words, from the life-cycle.

His analysis, although subtler and more elegant, comes close in the end to Christopher Lasch's denunciations of contemporary society in *The Culture of Narcissism*. Although he has by this time dismissed all the usual arguments for pornography's dangers, he finally produces a different and equally generalised objection. Once again, he grants pornography a central symbolic significance. Like the moralists he criticises, he evades the question of whether it really is as important as all that by aligning it with a familiar pessimistic verdict on our whole society.

Elizabeth Wilson's latest book is "The Lost Time Café" published by Virago

The voyage in

RESURRECTION AT SORROW HILL
Wilson Harris
Faber & Faber, £14.99
THE CARNIVAL TRILOGY
Wilson Harris
Faber & Faber, £9.99

Brian Morton

Stephen Hawking is to the postmodern novel what J W Dunne and *An Experiment With Time* were to early Modernism. Both provide a consoling objectification of creativity that demands no recourse to psychology. For most readers, Hawking's invocation of God was a satisfying cadence rather than a disturbing philosophical crux; for hadn't God just been dispensed with?

The problem is essentially the same with the Guyanese novelist Wilson Harris, except that Harris' fiction begins with the death of God and enacts the resurrection of meaning, as it were backwards, from the singular mystery of the Creation. The central drama of Harris' work, from *The Palace of the Peacock* (1960) onwards, is the validation of dream and the confounding of death. He has spoken about the "re-visionary strategies" of his fiction: the steady unfolding of the mythological substructures of which he was unaware at the time of writing, such as the connection between ship/sanctuaries and the City of God in the *Carnival* trilogy.

Harris is a metaphysical writer; not so much in the sense that he is concerned with abstract philosophical concepts, but in that his work is continually reinvented. Like the English Metaphysicals—it is no accident that the thrice-dead horseman of *Palace* is called Donne—he chooses to reveal himself at the moment of maximum doubt. The parallelism between Newton and the poets, or the frail Hawking and the novelists, still holds up.

Harris' stories are plastic rather than iconic, dynamic rather than fixed. They pledge resurrection, but in a context that forces the reader to push doubting fingers into the text's wounds—literal ones, in the case of *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*. His 20th novel, and by some way his longest, it returns to the central drama of the first: the voyage upstream into the uncharted hinterland that stands for the mythic unconscious.

Harris was trained as a hydrographic surveyor in British Guiana during the war. As a country, it is an almost perfect emblem of the Freudian—or maybe better, the Jungian—model of the mind. There are also, of course, substantial post-colonial agendas. But one suspects that, for Harris, the deep significance of colonialism is psychic, Conradian. Even present-day Guyanans, Harris insists, display little enthusiasm to explore the interior, and restrict their activities to a narrowly rational seaboard. To that degree at least, he and V S Naipaul are pessimistically like-minded.

In the *Carnival* trilogy (*Carnival* itself, *The Infinite Rehearsal* and *The Four Banks of the River of Space*) Harris sets about remapping three classics: *The Odyssey*, *The Divine Comedy* and the Faust legend. He shifts their psychic and mythological watersheds ever inland, rediscovering their radical content.

In *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*, he does something rather different. It is perhaps the nearest thing he will ever write to a developed novel of manners and psychology. The background is an asylum in which the inmates, broken by their contact with the heartland, exist in a kind of flux with "the greats": Montezuma, Leonardo, Judas, Giordano Bruno. These are the central actors of the larger cultural struggle. But the central narrative impact, clearer perhaps than in any of his other books, concerns the adulterous love of Hope and Butterfly, and the putative revenge of her husband, Christopher D'eath.

The shots fired at the lovers are of a far more uncertain trajectory and "magic" potency than any discharged in Dallas 30 years ago. Like the shot that "kills" Donne in *Palace*, they are transformed in flight and confer an instantaneous regeneration. The "wounds" are both stigmata and script, love and its punishment in an eternal dialectic. The third shot D'eath reserves for himself; he survives materially, but with a huge spider-wound on his cheek. Harris has rarely used the Christian underpinning so boldly, even when he made a connection in the *Carnival* trilogy between the bloody thicket on Calvary and the crucified rainforest of South America.

Guarding the Asylum for the Greats is the widowed Dr Daemon. His wife Ruth, like Harris characters in the past, has perished in the rapids and has not been yielded up by the three rivers that converge beneath Sorrow Hill. During his time as a surveyor, Harris lost friends to the jungle. They were never recovered, and there is a principle of metaphysical *habeas corpus* underlying these mysteries that Harris continually invokes.

All of his work, now more than 30 years in the making, is of a piece. It has been a long voyage upstream, largely against the critical current. Where more rational travellers would portage past falls and rapids, Harris takes us through them, plunging into the mystery. It will take years to unravel his significance, and to do so may demand an awarness of nature and its unity that we have already lost or destroyed.

Terror works

FRANCO: A BIOGRAPHY
Paul Preston
HarperCollins, £20

Adam Hopkins

Generalísimo Francisco Franco Bahamonde: those old enough to have lived in Spain during the dictator's time will remember the dreary syllables like the sound of a cracked bell. They will remember too the tiny stature and the paunchy stance, the piping voice, the arid cotton wool of rhetoric, continually readjusting the past, and the deep-down fear that Franco provoked, even as an old man.

It is strange to think of it now, with so many signs of his passage obliterated, but by the end of his days in 1975 this seemingly banal and unimpressive figure had not only held more power than any previous leader of Spain, whether king or queen, dictator, prime minister or president, but had exercised it unflinchingly for almost 40 years. During this time, he had led "his" Spain—the faction that won the civil war of 1936-39 and stood against communism, freemasonry (a personal obsession), long hair, political liberty and intellectual excellence—in an unending campaign of vengefulness and division.

Yet he believed that he had preserved traditional Christian values and military honour, had given Spain peace and prosperity and, with tremendous subtlety, kept his country out of the second world war despite enormous pressure from those very Fascist powers that had helped him to victory. Franco was a major phenomenon, however you look at it. What has increasingly been required, amid a flood of memoirs following his death, is a biography so well researched that one could accept it as close to the true record and so detailed that those who questioned the con-

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clusions would be sufficiently supplied with fact to argue a contrary position.

This is exactly what Franco has now received, in a monumental work by Paul Preston: a triumph of patience, assiduity and carefully sourced interpretation. Though bleak—as it must be—and undoubtedly hostile to Franco—how could it not be, given the emerging record?—this is a book that will join Raymond Carr's study of the Spanish 19th century as a benchmark for its period, referred to by Spanish as well as foreign readers. Not all the judgments will be equally accepted but, in a way, so much the merrier.

Preston's main conclusions on the classic controversies are fairly simple. On the latter days of the economy and its startling growth, he is clear that Franco barely comprehended what was happening, much less made it happen by his own leadership. Nevertheless, as the reader will note, he succeeded in taking the credit, unquestionably a clever trick.

As for the second world war, Preston demonstrates beyond doubt that Franco would have come in on the Axis side during its first successful months, had Hitler been willing to take responsibility for rearming, and feeding, a country shattered by the civil war. Though remaining emotionally loyal to Fascism, and sometimes forgetting himself enough to make amazingly pro-Axis speeches, Franco began to hold back only when chinks appeared in the Axis armour and he saw a reasonable prospect of receiving Allied oil and wheat. The subsquent notion that Franco played a double game from the start is simply untenable.

What is astonishing, though, is the degree to which Churchill himself purposely created that myth, so important to Franco later on. It was a short way from Churchill's 1944 assertions of Franco's "supreme services" to Spain's welcome back by the Americans in the 1950s, when they felt a need for military bases. One may well argue that it was this western input that allowed Franco to survive.

The wartime debate occupies a considerable portion of an enormous book, concerned above all with political and military decision-making. But there is, of course, far more, including much fascinating detail on Franco's personal life, revealing an almost comical pettiness. This is definitely required reading.

On the public front, one of the most important assertions is that Franco deliberately prolonged the civil war so as to conduct far-reaching purges—described as *limpieza*, meaning ideological "cleansing"—in newly conquered territory. A constant background is the sound, off-stage, of firing squads. There is a chilling picture of Franco equably signing death warrants in speeding cars and in his quiet coffee-time after lunch.

He did it, what's more, all his adult life—as youthful military commander in Morocco, as leader of the rebel Nationalists and finally as head of state—with an eery calmness, much remarked upon, and an absolute conviction that other people's lives were his to dispose of. The executions slackened in later years, but Franco in fact ended his life with a fresh bout of black repression.

For me, and perhaps for others, this is the deepest, saddest and most horrible lesson of Francoism. However it is wrapped up in a flag, however it is justified, in whatever stinking holes or ditches, bullrings or prisons it is perpetrated, terror really works, finally reducing a population to political apathy.

If you can keep the loyalty of the army and police, then no matter what inanities you commit (Franco believed he could find gold in Extremadura and feed a starving people on dolphin sandwiches, and that Spain could grow rich on synthetic petrol made of plant extracts and water), terror will enable tyranny to prevail. Coincidentally, it was the fear of further terror, and the desire to protect the new wealth of the 1950s and 1960s, that allowed Spain, that potentially brilliant nation, to make a peaceful transition to democracy when Franco died.

Preston tries to locate the seeds of the career in lack of paternal love and childhood insecurity. This scarcely explains the man's unblinking ferocity, so calm it was hardly cruelty, and, equally important, the extraordinary self-confidence and optimism. These

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qualities allowed him first to fire his troops with courage and enthusiasm and later, exercised with a weird, slow-motion cunning, to balance the competing forces in his coalition. Thus he held the army and the police in the palm of his hand for almost half a century. He may have been a sphinx without a riddle, but some kind of mystery abides.

Adam Hopkins is the author of "Spanish Journeys: a portrait of Spain" (Penguin)

Epic thuggery

THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO
Hugh Thomas
Hutchinson, £25

Frank McLynn

By any reckoning, Hernando Cortés' conquest of Mexico was one of the most startling exploits in history. Leaving Cuba in 1518 with some 550 Spaniards and a few guns and horses, within two years he had overpowered the mighty Aztec empire at Tenochtitlan (site of Mexico City). There have been few clearer tributes to what Nietzsche called the "morality of strenuousness", but Cortés' stupendous achievements with the sword receive their complement by pen in this exhaustive history, the product of ten years' work.

Thomas has erected an awesome Teotihuacan of scholarship, drawn from archives in Seville, Simancas, Mexico and elsewhere, so massive that it seemingly overwhelms any objections by its mighty erudition—though I wish he had avoided such elementary errors as describing the river Marañon as the Amazon's greatest tributary.

The scholarship in this volume leaves Thomas' own classic work on the Spanish civil war standing, though this book is not as well written as its remote predecessor. The narrative is generally fluent and absorbing, Thomas corrects many errors (pointing out that Cortés merely grounded his ships but did not burn them, as in the legend).

He shows great skill and flair in counterpointing events in Mexico with those in Spain and elsewhere in the Indies—essential if we are to grasp the totality of the historical process. But the great set-piece of Cortés' campaign—the disastrous defeat of the conquistadors during their retreat from Tenochtitlan on the night of 1 July 1520—fails to catch fire here. As elsewhere, memories of William Prescott are not extinguished.

In general, one would applaud this volume as a superb achievement were it not for Thomas' complaisant and, it seems to me, fatally unbalanced portrait of Cortés. Thomas, as he has made clear elsewhere, admires raw courage and Promethean endeavour, whatever their catastrophic consequences. This seems to have led him to turn a blind eye to his hero's failings.

Insubordinate, treacherous, disloyal, megalomaniacal, mendacious, avaricious, cruel, psychopathic and potentially genocidal, Cortés was basically a thug who got lucky—because of the quisling attitude of the Tlaxcalan Indians; because all who opposed him were so boneheaded; because the smallpox epidemic decimated the Indians but left the Spaniards unscathed; because the court of Spain connived at all his barbarities in its lust for gold.

In his assumption of the title of *Caudillo* and his systematic use of terror to cow opposition, Cortés was a pre-echo of Franco. Jung would say this was an example of a savage and primitive god lurking in the Iberian unconscious.

Thomas wants Cortés to be seen as a great man, so he plugs away at the theme of Aztec human sacrifice, hoping thereby to attenuate the moral queasiness we feel at the *caudillo*'s loathsome actions. But whereas the Aztecs sacrificed for their benighted religion, Cortés, the supposed promoter of Christianity and the law of love, sacrificed tens of thousands of human beings to his own ambition.

He regularly anticipated that American officer in Vietnam who claimed he had to destroy a town in order to save it, even down to the wording. He wiped out the town of Cholula *in terrorem*, and annihilated the beautiful city of Tenochtitlan, which was utterly destroyed after a three-month siege during which some 100,000 people—a third of the population—perished. It is possible that he poisoned five high-ranking Spanish officials simply because they opposed him, and it is a moral certainty that he murdered his wife.

The buckets of whitewash Thomas sloshes onto the canvas at this point strain one's patience with his Cortés-mania to the limit. By his own evidence, Thomas has already convicted Cortés as a psychopath but he is capable of the following astonishingly naive statement: "The fact that Cortés never showed any remorse is perhaps one more reason for thinking him innocent of murder."

As part of his apology for Cortés, Thomas is hostile to modern scholars of a liberal persuasion: those who (rightly) regard the *encomienda* system as a racket, and those who assert that smallpox enabled Cortés to defeat the Aztecs. He also shows poor historical sense in asserting that if Cortés had not conquered Mexico, the Aztecs could have gone the way of independent Japan.

Thomas is concerned about standing in the shadow of Prescott, but the true yardstick for his book is the parallel endeavour by John Hemming in his brilliant *The Conquest of the Incas*. While not playing down the military achievement of the conquistadors, Hemming laments their success and evinces deep sympathy for the Inca. Although Thomas is profoundly learned in the culture of the Aztecs, he has no sympathy for them, and this lack of a moral dimension is the chief flaw in this book. Hemming was learned, absorbing and had heart; Thomas has the first two qualities but signally lacks the last.

Frank McLynn's biography of Robert Louis Stevenson is published by Hutchinson

PRINTOUT

Other voices

Boyd Tonkin

You may recall the curious case of Toby Forward. This Anglican vicar managed to persuade Virago Press that he was, in fact, an Asian woman, and he published a volume of stories for young people under a fictitious name. Even in today's modern, go-ahead C of E, it seemed unwise for a priest to practise deception for gain. Ethics aside, the scandal also gave rise to some heated debate about the authenticity of his Asian characters. Must a writer share a background to present it with conviction? Or can imagination leap the fence of race, or sex, or age?

In Britain, it's common to assume that US literature now squirms under the heel of a PC dictatorship that forbids anyone to write about anything unless they can show the requisite cards of identity. Yet this year's Pulitzer Prize for fiction went to a writer who essayed one of the boldest feats of cross-cultural impersonation since the Boston Tea Party. Robert Olen Butler is (yes) a white, male novelist whose 15 stories in "A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain" (Minerva, £5.99) adopt the voices of Vietnamese Americans: young and old, men and women. They reflect on war, flight and exile from new settlements in a sultry Louisiana that puts many in mind of home.

Butler has previously written several novels about the US trauma in Vietnam. Here, the perspectives shift but the war remains a primal fall from grace. In the longest story, "The American Couple", a woman on a Mexican vacation (won as a game-show prize) watches in perplexity as her stolid husband Vinh plays combat games with a crazy vet. "They had shared something once, something important," she thinks, like so many figures in film and fiction since that last chopper rose from the Saigon embassy.

Tact and delicacy mark each tale. Buddhists and Catholics, housewives and entrepreneurs: Butler admires them all. He writes with exceptional elegance,but a whiff of sentiment drifts like incense through the book. Gabrielle Tran, the game-show queen, admits that "Vietnamese can be very blunt"; there's precious little bluntness here. Not that it matters in work as finely spun as the title story, in which the ghost of Ho Chi Minh visits a dying patriarch to remind him of their shared youth in a London hotel kitchen.

Butler spoke fluent Vietnamese even before he set foot in the country as an Army linguist in 1971. He comes as close as any outsider could to the core of an alien culture. But could his brand of ventriloquism succeed here? I doubt whether an English writer who set a first-person narrative among, say, Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets would find a publisher now, let alone win a top award. Butler's triumph may help to bury the smug assumption that right-on rigidity about ethnic representation starts in mid-Atlantic.

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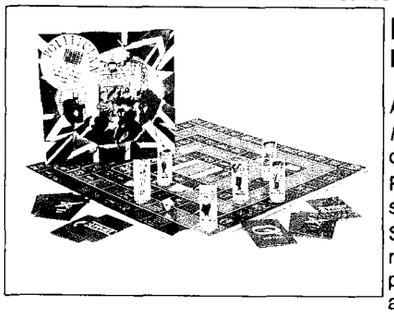

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ENDGAMES: Weekend Competition

No 3302 Set by Russell Lucas
We asked for a couple of verses from Eliot's "The Waste Band".

Report by Ms de Meaner
What chiefly struck me was that nearly every entry had at least *one* brilliant line. I particularly liked Alanna Blake's last: "I will wear the top inch of my pants unzipped", and Steve Bremner's "You have been weighed in the balance, and found a trifle chubby." There were few duds this week, so I'm extremely proud of you all. And even those who sent in poems based on an Eliot masterpiece other than "The Waste Land" need not think, looking at those that won, that theirs were not considered; they were. Hon menshes to Bill Greenwell, Watson Weeks and Sid Field. £15 for the winners.

I was extremely touched to receive a billet-doux from Basil Ransome-Davies, confessing that he sent in a "dud anagram" to last week's comp. How nice to know he is finally coming round to acknowledging my unerring good judgment. The respect of the compers is my most prized possession.

Chocolate is the cruellest munch, breeding
Belly out of a thin flank, stretching
Waist band with deep fat.
Obesity warmed me, covering
Bones in forgetful folds, furring
Arteries with platelets.

Angina surprised me; passing through Burlington Arcade
With a heavy tread, I fell in Cork Street,
And went by ambulance, into the Crash Ward,
And ate aspirin, between life and death.
Mensch ist, was er ißt. Erst Wägen, dann Wagen.
"O keep the waist band loose that's friend to man,
"Or you will never do it up again!
"You hypocrite obèse! *Mon semblable,—mon frère!*"
T Griffiths

December is the cruellest month, breeding
Time upon time when one stuffs oneself, feeding
On turkey and on pudding,
On figs, and also on canapes.
For I, Tiresias, foresee these churning
Within the resentful stomach, finally bursting
The trouser's waistband.
Ach nein, if faut menden die hosen, Marie,
In the Hofgarten, perhaps, whilst I hide behind a rock.

You gave me Dairy Milk a year ago.
Here is your card, you said, the Exploding Man.
I will show you fear in a handful of soft centres.

If you see Mrs Equitone, tell her I have observed the fit,
On television, in the season of marathons.
I see them jog across London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many,
With drawn skulls' faces, lungs agonised by pain
On a Sunday, when the cake shops are shuttered.
Fear death by jogging.
At Richmond once I raised my knees
To a Jane Fonda workout tape. The effort undid me.

I eat much of the night, and grow bulbous in winter.
George Simmers

GRYPH'S QUIZ

The answers all have something in common

1. Speculative disaster 2. Polaris 3. Protective headgear 4. A1 5. Steinbeck/Kazan classic 6. Hancock's haunt 7. Life-jacket 8. Left-hander 9. Kodak inventor 10. Setting for the Great Game

Answers below

April is the cruellest month, dragging
Last year's clothing out of drawers, showing
Leggy models in airy fashions, mixing
Memory, desire and advertisers' inducements.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Bulges in concealing fabrics, feeding
A little life with fried tubers.
Now on Sunday mornings we read the supplements,
Admiring walnut-breasted mannequins in slim skirts,
Choosing fashionable diets and calculating carbohydrates.
We drank black coffee and talked for an hour.
Have you tried the Kingsland diet, liebling,
Winkles and cheese straws? Samantha lost three pounds
Le premier jour. And when I stayed with the Archduke,
My cousin, I tried on a pair of his trousers
But I still looked lumpish. The waist band sagged
And the rolled bottoms emphasised my adiposity.
Gerard Benson

April is the cruellest girl, scrounging
Garments out of our wardrobe, mixing
Up our co-ordinates, mocking
Dull frocks without stain.
Skirts which kept us warm, wrap round her
Girth in generous folds, needing
A lot of tucks at their waist lines.

What are the zips that stick, what bulges grow
Beside this skinny maiden? Daughter, fair,
You only see and know our gracelessness,
This heap of long lost semblances, where the shape bursts
And the diet gives no face-lift, the exercise no youth
And the dry skin no healing moisture. Tell us
Where are the figures lost figuring calories?
Then April, April, laugh thy girlish laughter;
For April, April, life's heaviness comes after . . .
M E Ault

No 3305 Set by Tim Hopkins
How would any famous (ie, so I have heard of them) children's author have coped with an adult novel? Obvious examples are Blyton, Potter and Crompton—but do come up with your own. Max 200 words and in by 25 November.

Quiz answers

All the answers feature directions: 1) South Sea Bubble; 2) North Star; 3) Sou'wester; 4) Great North Road; 5) East of Eden; 6) East Cheam; 7) Mae West; 8) Southpaw; 9) George Eastman; 10) North-West Frontier

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CHESS

Instant books on chess matches are, naturally, not as detailed or precise as later annotations. Hot off the press is *World Chess Championship: Kasparov vs Short*, by Daniel King and Donald Trelford (Cadogan, 128 pages, £7.99). The concept here was to combine an experienced journalist, for Trelford, as well as being the former editor of the *Observer*, is co-author, with Kasparov, of the biography of the world champion, *Child of Change*, with a good grandmaster. Trelford supplies the overview and the preamble to each game, while King analyses the play. It's an interesting idea, and Trelford does a good job of representing the chess enthusiast on the Clapham omnibus with his passion for the game coming across clearly. He also does well in presenting the machinations that led to the breakaway from FIDE and the formation of the PCA in a concise manner that is accessible to the non chess-player.

For myself, I felt that I learned quite a bit through being present at all but one of the games of this contest. In particular, I was struck by how difficult it is to make swift assessments of a position under the pressured conditions of practical play, for there was frequently violent disagreement among the commentating grandmasters in the press room.

For those who have a book of the match, or are acquainted with the games (and I feel that must include most readers of this column), I could pick out the following moments of contention or surprise to the master pundits:

(a) In game one, when at move 29 Kasparov played Re4, then placed his queen behind the rook and opened up Short's kingside in what ought to have been a decisive manner. Prior to this, the press room had been praising Short's defensive play.

(b) In game two, the exchange sacrifice 25 . . . Rxc3 was not seriously considered by us analysts, but immediately after it there was great concern for Short's position had Kasparov followed up with the attacking 25 . . . Qc5 instead of hastening to exchange queens. I have yet to see analysis to satisfy me that White would then have been OK.

(c) In game three, we are yet to be treated to an explanation from either player of why Kasparov declined to win a clear pawn at move 13 with 13.axb5 axb5 14.Qb3. I expect that the truth is that both patzers missed it.

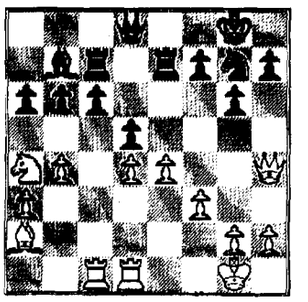
(d) In game seven, Kasparov had suggested that Short could have held on had he not grabbed out with 33 . . . bxd4? The world champion proposes 33 . . . Bg5! as an adequate defence. I can vouch that the ambience in the press centre was that of watching the denouement of a beautifully constructed positional build-up. The grandmasters did not appreciate that Kasparov had made earlier inaccuracies and were simply too over-reverential towards "The Boss". In the colder light of day, it seems that he messed things up and Short should have survived in that game. Of all the mis-assessments of the match, I found this the most striking.

(e) In game nine, which I was commentating on at the Savoy, I felt certain that the critical test of Kasparov's opening innovation 11.Ne2 was 11 . . . 5 12.Be5!? (a splendidly creative concept!) 12 . . . 0-0 13.Nd4 and now not 13 . . . Bg6, as played, but 13 . . . Nxc3 14.Nxf5 Ne4+ 15.Kd1 Nc6!? Some days after I mentioned this to Short, and he agreed that this may be the most severe challenge to Kasparov's idea.

(f) My impression of game 12 was that the play was perfect.

(g) Game 15 was fabulous.

White: G.Kasparov Black: N Short.
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 0-0 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.Nge2 Re8 9.0-0 Nf8 10.b4! a6 A serious decision, as we shall see. **11.a3 c6 12.Qc2 g6 13.f3 Ne6 14.Bh4 Nh5 15.Bxe7 Rxe7 16.Qd2 b6** Completely wrong, indeed almost losing according to Kasparov, but nobody else thought it all that bad. **17.Rad1 Bb7 18.Bb1 Nhg7 19.e4 Rc8 20.Ba2 Rd7 21.Nf4! Nxf4 22.Qxf4 Ne6 23.Qe5 Re7 24.Qg3 Qc7 25.Qh4 Ng7 26.Rc1 Qd8 27.Rfd1 Rcc7 28.Na4 . . .** (see diagram.) **28 . . . dxe4?** A decision



that astonished me. How can Black give away his central strongpoint?

Afterwards, Kasparov told me that after the superior 23 . . . Rcd7 he is still winning with 29.e5. I tried to argue with him eg, 29 . . . f5 30.exf6 ep Rf7, but he stuck to his guns. Anyway, it had to be a better try. Now Short is immediately swept away. **29.fxe4 Qe8 30.Nc3 Rcd7 31.Qf2 Ne6 32.e5 c5 33.bxc5 bxc5 34.d5 Nd4 35.Ne4 Qd8 36.Nf6+ Kg7 37.Nxd7 Rxd7 38.Rxc5 Ne6 39.Rcc1 Black Resigned.**

James Plaskett

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BACKCHAT

Mat Coward reveals the true purpose of Britain's satirists

I've been writing a lot of fiction lately, and the great thing with fiction is, you don't have to worry about it being too much like real life. You can write a story about someone getting murdered, and no one's going to complain that it's old hat—because that's what people expect from fiction: old stories with new lines.

Humour, on the other hand (or satire, as we call it when it hasn't got many jokes in it), faces different demands, and these days it's no good a satirist doing a piece about, for instance, how the House of Lords has become the only vigorous anti-establishment institution in Britain, because people are just going to say: "Yeah, but that's true, isn't it? I mean, that's what's really happening, isn't it? So, like, where's the joke, man? Where's the clever flight of fancy?"

Tell you the truth, I'm not all that keen on satire myself. Sure, I'll turn my hand to just about anything in the inky line. I have to, after all, just to get by; I'm far too unqualified and unadventurous to go back to working for a living at my age. But even though I'm quite willing to pump out a few hundred words of barbed invective when called upon to do so, that doesn't mean I count the day well spent. The problem is that no one, as far as I know, has ever come up with a way of creating satire that makes its readers feel more inclined to actively oppose whatever absurdity it is that's under attack. And this is no accident.

Most of the satirists working in this country today are actually members of MI5's O Directorate, the branch that deals with counter-intelligence—in its most literal sense. That explains why, when you finish reading a satirical attack on government corruption, the only emotions you're left with are despair and indifference.

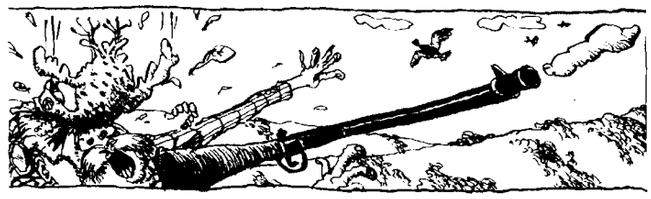
It also explains why there isn't really anybody working in this country today who you would wish to dignify with the term "satirist"; just as MI5 hasn't caught a genuine spy since the 1930s, so its annual trawl through the Oxbridge small-press scene has never found anyone worth reading. MI5 costs more to run than the National Health Service, but if Stella Rimington were on a Civil Service wages-by-results scheme, she'd have to sell all her S&M gear to meet the rent on her new dungeon suite.

So, how do you feel after reading that? Better? Or bitter? Or butter? Butter, I'll bet. "But, er—it's all true, isn't it? MI5 really does cost more than the NHS, and it really hasn't, ever, committed one single act of useful service to the taxpayer. So really, things being as hopeless as they are, I might as well give up politics and spend my evenings at the amateur dramatics club. Or writing satire on an O Directorate subsidy."

The true purpose of satire, from a ruling-class point of view, is to encourage cynicism. Four decades of uncensored political humour in Britain have produced an electorate that knows the whole world's falling apart and believes itself to be individually and collectively impotent in the face of terminal decay. Falling electoral rolls, climbing abstentionism: the 100 per cent no-vote, no-hope society is almost upon us.

But, you know, it's not all my fault. I also write gardening columns, and they are, by their nature, much more constructive. Next week in this space: how to succeed with winter hardy leeks—complete with diagrams, culinary hints, inventive obscenities, and defamatory insults.

FORTEANA



Paul Sieveking muses on the magic of Thailand

Thailand teems with strange news, and several of the national papers, like the *Bangkok Post*, are published in English. Here is a sampling of stories from that remote land where magic and ritual are still very much integrated into everyday life.

Just before Christmas last year, a gang of transvestites robbed tourists by enticing them to suck their tranquilliser-laced nipples and thus putting them to sleep, according to the Bangkok police. They were told the ploy was adopted because "many customers did not drink". Four transvestites and a woman were arrested after a Syrian and a Hong Kong man said they were robbed of a Rolex watch and nearly £2,000 in cash.

Last April, the Thai minister for science and technology had a distinctly un-western explanation for how he escaped an assassin's bullet. Mr Phisan Moonlasartsathorn said that the "magnetic field" of an amulet he wears "deflected the bullet", missing his head by a centimetre. The amulet had "invisible power" by virtue of "natural science".

Soon after a 37lb meteorite fell near Khamla Rakkorn's house in Phetchabun province on 13 June, neighbours built a shrine around the crater. Crowds started visiting the rock, thinking it was invested with special powers. One newspaper account said people bought lottery tickets with numbers they thought they saw in the meteorite. A merchant offered the equivalent of US$400,000 for it, but Khamla, 55, didn't want to sell it.

Four days later, the authorities seized it, saying that what falls from the sky belongs to the state. Khamla shut herself away and stopped eating and talking. Villagers marched in protest, demanding the meteorite's return.

Interior ministry legal experts ruled on 22 July that the rock was an extraterrestrial object, not a natural resource or buried artifact, and therefore not state property. "It is like a cloud or the moon, which cannot be taken for commercial value," they said, according to a ministry source. The grey stone was handed back on a red cloth-covered platter by the deputy governor of Phetchabun on 5 August.

Villagers in Long district, Phrae province, northern Thailand, became disturbed in June 1993 when more than two-dozen old people died in quick succession. Unease turned to alarm after stories spread that a pick-up truck without a driver roared into town before the spate of deaths.

"There was a pick-up truck from far away with old people and teenagers in it, and then someone walked from it into a village lane to ask if there were any elderly people in the area," one old woman told TV Channel 9. "Someone said there were many old people around, and soon thereafter they started dying." Villagers festooned their homes with banners that claim, in the local Lanna dialect as well as in Thai: "This house does not have any old people." Not every villager thought the old people died of supernatural causes. "They were elderly people who had been sick for a long time," said one.

More supposedly healthy people died in September in Thainmee in the north-east province of Surin, prompting fears that the village had been invaded by *pee paob* (living dead), who take over human bodies and kill and eat other people, including internal organs. Villagers placed human-sized straw dolls with faces like demons outside their houses and strung "sacred string" around the village. Buddhist monks were also invited to perform exorcism rites.

The fire in the Kader Industrial Company plant near Bangkok on 10 May, which killed 200 workers, was possibly the worst factory fire in world history. Thailand's mass-circulation daily *Thai Rath* claimed the fire happened because the factory had been built on the site of a cemetery without any attempt to appease the spirits.

Mr Saengchaliao Sipeung, 41, headman of a village near the factory, said four workers had been possessed by spirits since 1990. One of them told others she wanted to take the lives of 200 workers. A medium told him the possessions and accidents occurred because the owners failed to build small ceremonial houses for the spirits.

Paul Sieveking is editor of "Fortean Times"

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